

# ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE PLAN 2013

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The mission of the Indiana University South Bend Assessment Committee is to promote, support and monitor academic program assessment activities at the university.

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## COMMITMENT TO ASSESSMENT

The Indiana University South Bend Assessment Committee grew from the University's strong commitment to providing the best possible education for its students. In 1995 the Assessment Committee developed an ambitious plan for implementing and monitoring assessment of student learning in all campus departments and for the Committee's own activities and governance. This document, IUSB Plan for Assessing Student Achievement, was submitted to and approved by the NCA, the (then) accrediting body of IU South Bend.

Since the inception of the assessment committee at IU South Bend, there have been major developments in the scholarship of assessment. Emphasis has changed from mere recordkeeping to using assessment information to improve programs and document the learning of students as they progress through academic programs. Assessment processes have matured in all of our academic departments, and the Assessment Committee has been able to change its focus

from implementing formal assessment processes to supporting academic departments as they further develop and creatively implement best practices for their programs. Although the Assessment Committee continues to feel strongly that individual departments are in the best position to establish learning goals, student learning outcomes and determine the most appropriate assessment tools, the Assessment Committee supports and promotes their efforts in a number of different ways. The committee provides regular feedback on the campus assessment process, sponsors workshops and conferences and provides grants to support new assessment activities.

Over time, the expectations of government and accreditation bodies have intensified as well, demanding greater accountability and evidence of the value of the education that students are receiving.

Advances in technology and software have resulted in major changes in the way assessment is being documented and reported. Forward thinking academic institutions created software which allowed institutions to standardize the reporting process and easily generate reports for accrediting and other bodies. Several of these have become commercially available. In 2012, the South Bend campus, along with the other regional IU campuses invested in web management software. This technology will both simplify assessment reporting and bring the process into line with other IU campuses.

In order to reflect the changes in philosophy and practice that have evolved in the last two decades, the IU South Bend Assessment Committee completely revised the plan which directs the activities of the Committee in 2007, and again in 2013. This document outlines the current structure and activities, and provides a foundation for the Committee's work in the years to come.

In writing this plan, the Assessment Committee would like to re-commit to its role in realizing IU South Bend's goal of assuring that its students meet the challenging learning goals set by the University system, the campus and academic departments.

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## HISTORY

The Assessment Committee was initiated in 1987 under the aegis of the Dean of Faculties with the appointment of 10 members representing various departments and programs across the campus including, sociology, education, psychology, guidance and counseling, and student affairs. At its initiation the Assessment Committee had three specific goals:

- To become more informed about assessment activities in higher education
- To organize the assessment effort necessary for various accreditation processes
- To set up mechanisms or systematic program review and outcomes assessment

To accomplish these goals, IUSB brought in an assessment consultant to provide a group presentation on the assessment movement to several IUSB faculty and to provide information about a standardized competency test. In the fall of 1988, IU organized the first statewide Conference on Assessment at which many IUSB faculty played a leadership role in providing information and facilitating discussions using “round table” formats.

From the beginning, the IUSB Assessment Committee has been responsible for promoting and supporting the continuing development of assessment efforts at the university. The responsibilities of the committee include the following

- Promote and support the continuing development of assessment efforts at the university
- Manage the collection of assessment data from units of the university
- Coordinate the implementation of assessment efforts at IUSB
- Publish an annual report of assessment efforts at IUSB
- Maintain an assessment archives

At its origin, the Assessment Committee consisted of 10 voting members composed of IU South Bend faculty and professional staff, with representation of at least 6 full-time faculty, and could include 2 non-voting ex-officio members that represent the Office of Academic Affairs and students. The voting members were to serve 2-year alternating terms and were not to serve for more than 2 consecutive terms. The Committee members were representative of departments and programs across the campus. The term length was later lengthened to 3 years to provide greater continuity on the committee.

In 1998 an Assessment Committee secretary was hired part-time. She has been responsible for the assessment archives, development of new forms, communications with committee members and campus bodies, meeting minutes, and web development. The website was established in the 2002 academic year and has been used as a tool for communication of the activities of the Committee. She also maintains the assessment library, a collection of books and monographs that can be checked out by interested IU South Bend faculty and program staff. Starting in 2012 she has assisted the campus Weave administrator in setting up and maintaining the Weave system.

In 2003, the Assessment Committee became a joint committee with the Senate, wherein 5 of the members would be appointed by the Academic Senate and 4 of the members would continue to be appointed by the VCAA. There have been seven chairs of the AC.

In 2012, IU South Bend invested in the Weave web-based assessment system. Weave is a powerful software application that addresses the need to develop and maintain continuous improvement processes for both the academic and administrative structures within an institution of higher education. It guides and provides for the alignment of multiple processes, including assessment, planning, accreditation, budgeting and institutional priorities. It was originally developed at Virginia Commonwealth University, and continues to be developed by experienced higher education professionals<sup>1</sup>. All regional campuses in the IU system are using this software. Use of Weave will allow for greater cross-fertilization of innovative ideas across departments, campuses and assessment groups at other universities. The investment in Weave demonstrates a commitment to the best in assessment practice and accountability to administrative, government and accrediting bodies.

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## 2013 PHILOSOPHY AND ASSUMPTIONS

**Philosophy** | Assessment is an evolutionary process. Faculty and programs at Indiana University South Bend understand that the purpose of assessment is to improve programs.

- **Defining assessment** | Assessment is a faculty directed review of student learning for the purpose of program improvement.
- **The basis of assessment** | Assessment is based upon the objectives of the university, the learning objectives of the academic unit, and the link between those objectives and student outcomes.
- **Responsibility for assessment** | Administrative responsibility for assessment resides within the Office of Academic Affairs and the Academic Senate. The operational responsibility for assessment is vested in the campus Assessment Committee, Deans and individual academic units. At the campus level, the Assessment Committee, appointed by the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and the Academic Senate, is responsible for promoting, supporting and monitoring academic program assessment activities at the university. Each academic program, and the General Education Committee, is responsible for formulating an assessment plan and conducting assessment activities and evaluation according to that plan. Academic programs and the General Education Committee are responsible for revisions in each assessment cycle which includes updating their goals, objectives/student learning outcomes, measures, findings and most importantly their action plans. The emphasis is on closing and documenting the loop. Academic Deans are responsible for ensuring that all academic programs document their assessment activity in Weave.

**Assumptions** | The following series of assumptions underlie the IU South Bend Assessment Plan, its policies and procedures, and guide the work of the committee.

- **Faculty involvement** | Faculty are in the best position to define learning goals, establish and evaluate assessment techniques, and interpret the results of assessment activities. Therefore, the primary responsibility for the work of assessment lies with individual academic programs. The Assessment Committee offers guidance, and monitors assessment programs, but does not mandate specific learning goals and assessment techniques.
- **Developmental and evolutionary process** | Assessment is a continuous and continuously changing process. As learning goals evolve, assessment techniques are tested and programs improve, the assessment process should be flexible enough to adapt to those changes. Therefore, the assessment committee looks for updated assessment Student Learning Outcomes, Measures and Action Plan. Findings are documented and reported newly each year.
- **Educational objectives** | Well-defined student learning outcomes are the measures used to assess a program. Academic units are required to develop a set of measurable educational objectives as part of the departmental assessment plan, and to update those goals to reflect changes in the program and in the discipline.
- **Assessment techniques** | Academic programs use a wide range of assessment techniques appropriate to specific disciplines. Scholarship in assessment has shown that educators can measure student learning most accurately when a variety of direct, (exams, portfolios, etc.) and indirect (alumni surveys, exit interviews, etc. . .) techniques are used. The Assessment Committee encourages programs to use a balance of direct and indirect measures of student learning, and to not rely too heavily on a single technique. Summary reports from Weave demonstrate the wide variety of assessment techniques being used and can provide inspiration for departments looking to diversify their assessment options.
- **Transparency** | The assessment committee is committed to making the academic assessment process as transparent as possible. Access to assessment documentation by campus administration, accrediting bodies, campus units and other invested parties is necessary for responsible accountability. Academic programs can

be efficient and effective if they can learn from the work of others. Weave has been configured so that academic units and other invested bodies can access the work of all departments.

- **Program changes** | The purpose of assessment is program improvement in order to improve student learning and retention. Program improvements are the consequence of program changes linked to program weaknesses identified by the assessment process. Program improvements involve a multi-step process: 1) assess student achievement, 2) identify program weaknesses, 3) propose program changes, 4) implement selected-program changes, 5) assess student achievement to determine the value of program changes. This process takes considerable time and investment of resources.

When to change what and how to change it is an educational concern. Implementing program changes may involve one faculty member, a group of faculty, an entire academic unit, or it may involve the academic senate through one or more committees. Control of these program changes is the responsibility of the faculty. The educational time line for these steps can vary from as little as a semester to several years. Monitoring the impact of this process of program improvement is long term, and requires an extended view. Therefore, one of the crucial components of Weave is a detailed, regularly-updated Action Plan which can track the implementation of these long and short-term changes in academic programs allowing for trend analysis. In addition, Weave easily highlights the links to general education and campus strategic goals and initiatives, and shows specifically where general education and strategic goals are being met.

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## **2013 POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

### **Responsibilities of the Assessment Committee**

- Promoting, monitoring and supporting the continuing development of assessment efforts at the university.
- Coordinating the implementation of assessment efforts at Indiana University South Bend.
- Facilitating the accreditation process by assisting in the use of Weave and generating reports.
- Providing assessment summary information to campus committees, administration and other appropriate university stakeholders.
- Maintaining assessment archives, which include annual Assessment Committee reports, assessment data, and other materials gathered by the Assessment Committee during the course of fulfilling its duties.
- Helping the Weave Administrator coordinate the use of program evaluation software.
- Awarding assessment grants, on a competitive basis, as funds are available.
- Maintaining the Assessment Committee website

### **General Operation**

- The presence of a majority of the members of the Assessment Committee shall constitute a quorum.
- Minutes of meetings will be recorded and, upon approval by voting Assessment Committee members, will be archived, forwarded to the Academic Senate and made available on the Assessment Committee website along with other assessment-related documentation supporting on-going assessment efforts at the university.
- The Assessment Committee shall hold at least three regular meetings during each semester of each academic year.

## **Membership**

- Nine faculty members with voting privileges serve staggered three year appointments. Five members will be appointed by the Executive Committee of the Academic Senate; four members will be appointed by the Office of Academic Affairs. Staggered terms are intended to insure that in any given year approximately two thirds of the Assessment Committee members have had previous experience on the Committee.
- One student representative appointed by the Student Council
- The Assessment Committee membership will include representation from all campus Schools and Divisions. Members will be appointed from diverse campus units, (departments, units and library,) in order to best represent the campus make-up. Because of the increasing role of technology in assessment and the role that that technology will play in accreditation, the committee will include the campus Weave administrator.
- The Assessment Committee shall include two non-voting ex officio members representing the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs.

## **Chairperson**

- A chairperson of the Committee will be appointed by the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs from among the nine faculty members.
- The chair shall serve a one-year term beginning immediately following appointment.
- The chair is responsible for coordinating Assessment Committee business and presiding at all meetings of the Assessment Committee or designating a temporary presiding officer.
- The chair is responsible for ensuring the assessment secretary or an assessment committee member records minutes coordinates the archiving of minutes and other materials that document Committee business.

## **Assessment Grants**

- Assessment grants supporting assessment activities at the university will be awarded competitively, by a majority vote of the Assessment Committee, to faculty, staff, and other members or units of the university submitting proposals that meet current published guidelines.
- Assessment grants are awarded in support of specific work described in funded proposals and are not to be expended on materials or activities not described in the funded proposal.
- AC grant accounts will expire one year from the date the grant account is opened unless special arrangements are approved by the AC.
- The Assessment Secretary shall assure that funds remaining in an Assessment Committee grant account will revert to the Assessment Committee general fund upon expiration of the assessment grant account.
- Recipients of Assessment Grants are responsible for providing the Assessment Committee and the Office of Research with a final report detailing the results of grant activities. The final report should be submitted no later than one month after the grant closing date.

## **Changes to Assessment Committee policies and procedures**

- At least a two-thirds vote in favor of any proposed change by the voting Assessment Committee membership shall be required for any modification to these policies and procedures.