MSUM’s HLC Assessment Academy Team, a sub-committee of the University Assessment Committee, has been working the past two years preparing for the HLC Reaffirmation of Accreditation visit scheduled for April 2017. Choosing the Open Pathways Project is one of the requirements for fulfilling our Reaffirmation. As part of that preparation, our MSUM community reached a consensus on these University-Wide Student Learning Outcomes: These areas are being targeted for intensive collection in Fall 2015 (critical thinking) and Spring 2016 (written and oral communication).

Minnesota State University Moorhead graduates will:

1. Demonstrate intellectual preparedness for success in professional life, bolstered by integrative experiences and technological competence.

2. Demonstrate effective written and oral communication, including use of appropriate technology.

3. Apply critical thinking skills in deliberative decision-making and problem-solving.

4. Demonstrate civic awareness and responsibility, both locally and globally.

5. Negotiate ethical relationships with people who have different backgrounds, life experiences, cultures, beliefs, and values.

6. Demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and the self-awareness to sustain the life of ongoing, independent learning.

This fall we begin the pilot process of assessing the learning of our students to determine if we are meeting this promise in both our curricular and co-curricular areas. After meeting with our HLC Assessment Academy Mentor, the team has decided to concentrate on assessing U-WSLO #3 this fall and U-WSLO #2 in the spring.

We want to work closely with our faculty and staff to ensure this pilot is successful, so we will begin by holding Open Forums on the following dates in September:

- Wednesday, September 9, from 11am – 1pm, and
- Thursday, September 10, from 2 – 4pm

During the first hour, we share information and solicit comments, questions, and feedback. During the second hour, we will work on assessment and get help from the Assessment Academy Team on your assessment strategies for the upcoming academic year. After attending one of the Open Forums, you will be able to:

- Develop a better understanding of what MSUM will be doing as part of the HLC process;
- Gather information on how you can contribute to this process;
- Learn from others ways to effectively integrate meaningful assessment into your courses; and
- Receive assistance with any questions or concerns you have regarding assessment.

If your schedule will not accommodate these dates, please send an email to assess@mnstate.edu or contact one of the Assessment Academy Team members so that we can set up individual appointments with you or your department.

- Jason Anderson, anderjas@mnstate.edu, 4634
- Tim Decker, deckerti@mnstate.edu, 2186
- Richard Lahti, lahtiri@mnstate.edu, 2149
- Stacy Voeller, voeller@mnstate.edu, 2348
- Diane Wolter, wolterdi@mnstate.edu, 2081
- Jack Healy, Jack.healy@mnstate.edu, 2581
- Michelle Malott, michelle.malott@mnstate.edu, 5892
- Denise Gorsline, gorsline@mnstate.edu, 4623
- Kevin Brown, kevin.brown@mnstate.edu, 2795

We are all in this Reaffirmation process together, and to be successful in the Accreditation process as we gear up for the HLC’s upcoming visit. An overwhelming message heard from our mentors and at last spring’s HLC Annual Conference was that completing the assessment cycle (i.e. using assessment to make data-driven improvements to instruction) was far more important in Reaffirmation considerations than either (a) having a perfect plan or (b) having data that shows excellent results.
Did You Know?

▸ More than 700 MSUM freshmen and seniors took part in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) during spring term 2015. They joined more than 315,000 first-year and senior respondents from 564 institutions across the US and Canada.

▸ A larger proportion of MSUM students responded to the NSSE survey last spring than did their counterparts at nearby peer institutions, including the other six MNSCU 4-year universities.

▸ MSUM freshmen said they spent about 12 hours per week preparing for class, while seniors reported spending about 15 hours.

▸ Ninety-two percent of freshmen rated their entire MSUM educational experience as “Excellent” or “Good,” compared to just 87% at nearby peer institutions.

▸ Eighty-one percent of seniors said they gained critical and analytical thinking skills while attending MSUM, and 78% reported they learned to write more clearly and effectively.

▸ Eighty percent of freshmen thought their instructors clearly explained course goals and requirements “quite a bit” or “very much.”

▸ Sixty-seven percent of MSUM seniors said “at least some” of their courses included a community-based service-learning project.

▸ MSUM freshmen and seniors both reported much higher satisfaction than their counterparts at nearby peer institutions with the quality of their campus interactions among other students, their academic advisors, their instructors, student services, and other administrative staff.

Liberal Arts and Sciences Assessment Summary

Fall 2014 saw the first full implementation of the LASC assessment, with a new online version of the assessment form made available during Spring 2015. Use of the electronic form has substantially reduced the effort needed to organize and analyze data (It has also somewhat reduced follow-up emails to clarify errors in the forms). Participation in LASC assessment during the 2014-2015 school year was sporadic at best. Thank you to all who participated. Some departments and LASC areas, such as mathematics/area 4, completed assessment in 100% of their classes. On the other hand, we were able to obtain virtually no information on LASC areas 1A and 1B and relatively little information on LASC 2 and areas 6, 7, 9 and 10. As LASC areas 1a, 1b, and 2 are strongly tied to 2 of 6 of MSUM’s University Wide Student Learning Outcomes, i.e. the outcomes we are using in our re-accreditation report, this lack of data may be damaging to our re-accreditation efforts.

These areas are being targeted for intensive collection in Fall 2015 (critical thinking) and Spring 2016 (written and oral communication).

All departments, programs, & faculty teaching LASC classes are reminded of the following:

▸ Assessment is best planned before the semester begins – do you have a plan for assessing the LASC competencies stated on your course outline?

▸ Course outlines, available at mnstate.edu/coursedescriptions.aspx, should be checked for accuracy and which LASC outcomes are listed for your course. Remember, it is a requirement that a course meet more than half of the learning outcomes (3 of 4, 3 of 5, 4 of 6, 4 of 7) for that LASC area. There have been several errors found stemming from mismatches between these requirements, the learning outcomes in the course outline, and the learning outcomes listed in the course syllabus/assessed in class.

▸ Word versions of the LASC assessment information can be found at mnstate.edu/assess/gea/lasc-forms.aspx. Accessing these forms at the beginning of the semester can make it easier to organize your data as you collect, so that completing the forms at the end of the semester is more efficient.

▸ The Faculty Development Center (mnstate.edu/faculty-development) and the University Assessment Committee (assess@mnstate.edu) both have resources and expertise on assessment best practices to help you with assessment design and implementation.

Thank you for your participation in MSUM LASC assessment.
Co-Curricular Assessment Highlights

As part of the HLC Assessment Academy process, the University adopted a new policy on campus-wide assessment. Beginning in July of 2014, all co-curricular departments were tasked with identifying student learning outcomes and developing assessment plans for their areas. Last academic year saw great progress in this area, particular in the Enrollment Management/Student Affairs division. Each department in the EMSA division submitted learning outcomes and plans by May 8. Over the summer the co-curricular subcommittee reviewed the submissions and provided feedback to departments to facilitate data collection beginning this fall.

Several departments will assess how they support the UWSLO that is the focus of fall semester: Apply critical thinking skills in deliberative decision-making and problem solving. First Year Programs will be evaluating how Student Orientation Counselors demonstrate critical thinking while interacting with first year students during Welcome Week activities. Intramurals and Club Sports will assess how their staff members demonstrate critical thinking during problem solving.

Other highlights from co-curricular assessment activities:

▸ Housing and Residential Life will assess the effectiveness of their new requirement to have students establish academic goals and identify strategies to achieve them.

▸ Scholarship and Financial Aid will evaluate students’ awareness of their indebtedness level and loan servicer—key factors in preventing loan default.

▸ The Admissions Office has revamped the Ambassador training program, and will be evaluating the effectiveness of the new approach through a combination of quizzes, guest feedback, and observation.

▸ The Disability Resource Center has revised intake procedures, and will assess students’ ability to articulate needed accommodations in conversations with faculty.

University-Wide Student Learning Outcomes

1. Demonstrate intellectual preparedness for success in professional life, bolstered by integrative experiences and technological competence.

2. Demonstrate effective written and oral communication, including use of appropriate technology.

3. Apply critical thinking skills in deliberative decision-making and problem-solving.

4. Demonstrate civic awareness and responsibility, both locally and globally.

5. Negotiate ethical relationships with people who have different backgrounds, life experiences, cultures, beliefs, and values.

6. Demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and the self-awareness to sustain the life of ongoing, independent learning.