2009

Learning Assessment in Missouri Postsecondary Education (LAMP)

Status Report
to the
Coordinating Board for Higher Education
June 2009

LAMP Advisory Council
Missouri Department of Higher Education
6/11/2009

Introduction

The Learning Assessment in Missouri Postsecondary Education (LAMP) Advisory Council was created to consider the issues surrounding statewide learning assessment and to make recommendations for policy. LAMP is comprised of a voluntary group of assessment professionals, postsecondary faculty and administrators, secondary educators and administrators, and Missouri Department of Higher Education (MDHE) staff.

The work of the Advisory Council was completed within subcommittees: Assessment Practices Subcommittee, Communications/Next Steps Subcommittee, and the Literature Review Subcommittee. This report reflects the progress-to-date of the LAMP Subcommittees; their draft documents are included in this report.

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LAMP Charge

Coordinating Board for Higher Education
Learning Assessment in Missouri Postsecondary Education (LAMP)

Higher education institutions must demonstrate good stewardship of both the resources and students with which they have been entrusted. Legislators and the public want quick, easy-to-understand information to ensure that postsecondary institutions are indeed held responsible for achieving their missions.
Comprehensive student learning assessment should foster student learning, establish a foundation for a culture of continuous improvement, and provide ways to demonstrate accountability. These practices provide opportunities for feedback, evaluation, and enhancement of instruction and curriculum development for postsecondary administrators and educators.

The challenge for higher education in Missouri is to create a statewide assessment policy that is built upon the foundations of previous statewide efforts [e.g., Missouri Assessment Consortium (MAC), Missouri Developmental Education Consortium (MoDEC), and Missouri Consortium for Measuring Value-Added Student Learning (MVASL)] and driven by the improvement of student learning while responding to the call for accountability. A cohesive statewide assessment approach must develop a greater understanding of the scope and magnitude of assessment in Missouri; gather information on best practices, both local and national; agree upon meaningful methods and outcomes; and make appropriate policy recommendations.

Consensus on student learning assessment issues will support multiple state-level priorities and address accompanying areas of policy impact, including the Coordinating Board for Higher Education (CBHE) coordinated plan, *Imperatives for Change*, and the SB 389-mandated Curriculum Alignment Initiative. In order to fulfill these mandates, the Commissioner of Higher Education, through the authority of the CBHE, has established Learning Assessment in Missouri Postsecondary Education (LAMP). LAMP is a voluntary group intentionally composed of a cross section of educators and administrators, including MAC members, institutional researchers, content area specialists, faculty, administrators, K-12 educators, and assessment specialists. Such a dynamic group provides opportunity for collective knowledge development and individual self-evaluation of assessment practices.

The following duties are necessary to carry out this charge:

1. Perform a review of Missouri postsecondary assessments currently in use
2. Perform a review of literature and professional knowledge regarding effective use of assessment of student learning for continuous improvement and for accountability
3. Deliver a report to the Commissioner of Higher Education by June 1, 2009, including:
    a. Summary and analysis of current Missouri practices

    b. Review of relevant assessment research
    c. Policy recommendations
    d. Impact on existing CBHE policies
    e. Possible pilot projects as proof of concept
4. Develop and implement a communication plan to publicize, allow feedback, and build support at the secondary and postsecondary levels concerning the development of a statewide assessment agenda.

All meetings will be advertised and open to the public.

LAMP Values Document

Following LAMP's inaugural meeting in October 2008, it was decided that a smaller group, called Next Steps, would be formed to further clarify a direction for the group. The Next Steps group developed a draft Principles/Values of Inclusion document that outline a set of values and principles that LAMP will use to guide its work. The principles are not meant to be principles of assessment, but rather, are meant to form the foundational principles on which LAMP's work will proceed.

LEARNING ASSESSMENT IN MISSOURI POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION (LAMP)
PRINCIPLES FOR INCLUSION/VALUES DOCUMENT

These values have been developed and refined by the "Next Steps" Group formed to clarify goals and direction after the first LAMP meeting on October 23, 2008. Note that these principles are not meant as principles of assessment, but are meant to form the foundational principles on which LAMP's work will proceed.

1. We want all institutions and sectors (e.g. secondary, postsecondary public, private, two-year, four-year) to be engaged in the process of making LAMP policy recommendations to the Commissioner
2. We acknowledge the opportunity for assessment to support accountability to our various publics
3. We value the mission and autonomy of each postsecondary institution
4. The primary purposes of assessment are to improve student learning, enhance curriculum development and instructional delivery, and support institutional continuous improvement
5. We recognize the existing assessment work in the state and will seek to build on that foundation where possible
6. We strive to reduce duplication of effort in assessment
7. We seek a collegial process for sharing assessments, best practices, and benchmarking for improvement
8. We focus on aspirational goals
9. We value using assessments to accomplish seamless educational transitions
10. We acknowledge the responsibility for assessment to respond to existing legislation

LAMP Policy Guidance Document

The MDHE staff provided the LAMP Advisory Council with the Guidance Document to outline the MDHE issues and policy questions that are foundational to the creation of LAMP. These issues provide the lens through which LAMP's tasks are identified.

LAMP Policy Guidance

The items below are meant to outline MDHE issues and policy questions that were foundational to the creation of LAMP. These are the issues upon which MDHE seeks input and information in the form of the LAMP report to the Commissioner for Higher Education. These issues are meant to serve as a lens through which LAMPs tasks and goals are to be chosen. Note that the policy priorities to address first are listed under number 2, items a, b, and c; the remaining policy issues will need to be addressed, but the department recognizes that it is necessary to identify priorities for directing resources.

1. **Articulation of Guiding Principles for a statewide Post-secondary Assessment Policy** a. Building upon prior statewide collaborative work on assessment (Missouri Assessment Consortium's "Guiding Principles on Assessment" and its accompanying Assessment Handbook) LAMP will articulate a comprehensive set of guiding principles addressing issues related specifically to statewide assessment practices and policy. These principles will be used to make recommendations about the role of MDHE in assessment across the state, definitions of different forms and purposes of assessment and their relationship to state policy.
2. **LAMP's charge highlights the capacity of assessment to foster student learning, establish** foundation for a culture of continuous improvement, and provide ways to demonstrate accountability. In the decentralized post-secondary educational environment, assessment provides an efficient and effective means of establishing academic trust among institutions, facilitating student transfer and ensuring educational quality. This process recognizes multiple opportunities for assessment to provide useful information along the path of an educational career. Reflective of the guiding principles, assessment at each transition point must ask questions related to purpose, audience, methods, and the role of the state and statewide collaboration, etc. LAMP is charged to create policy recommendations related to each point of transition. **a. Access and Placement (Preparation)** SB 389 recognizes a need for post-secondary institutions to establish expectations of student academic competencies (skills and knowledge) in order to succeed at collegiate level coursework. Through the Curriculum Alignment Initiative entry-level competencies for many areas have created criteria for access to college. Assessment related questions concerning how to determine attainment of these competencies need to be addressed.
   Potential Questions/Issues
   - What essential entry competencies important to access and college readiness have yet to be addressed by CAI?

- How can we best assess the entry-level competencies for entering postsecondary students?
- What still needs to be done to align CAI Entry Level Competencies with DESE educational assessment standards like Course Level Expectations (CLE)?
- In cases where CLEs are adequately aligned with entry-level competencies, are the End-of-Course examinations (EOC) of the CLEs sufficient to assess for access to postsecondary coursework?
- What kinds of supplemental assessment are required if EOC's not sufficient and/or for exceptions like late transfer students, out-of-state students, advancement from remediation/developmental coursework to college level etc.?
- Are competencies required across the board for all subject areas for access to any collegiate-level coursework or is performance considered on a subject by subject basis?
- How do we ensure that Dual Credit students meet the same expectations as other students?

b. Beginning General Education Course Transfer

SB 389 addressed concerns regarding the transfer of single beginning general education courses for collegiate credit for those students not transferring with the 42-hour block of articulated credit or an associate's degree. Assessment related questions regarding the appropriate certification of credit given the development of course-based exit-level competencies in CAI need to be addressed

Potential Questions/Issues

- What are advantages/disadvantages of statewide exam in beginning general education courses?
- What grading policies and procedures would have to be in place for grades to demonstrate achievement of exit competencies?
- How can we respect institutional autonomy while ensuring the transfer of knowledge and skills, not just the transfer of credit?
- Are there ways to "tune" learning goals or curriculum across the state so that grades might be sufficient demonstration of exit competencies mastery?

c. College level General Education

Assessment of general education competencies attainment provides a significant opportunity for intervention to promote student success, accountability to public stakeholders, and trust among institutions to facilitate transfer and articulation. LAMP is charged to develop a strategy that 1) enriches institutional practices which provide useful feedback for student and course improvement, 2) assures correspondence of student learning achievement across institutions, and 3)provides meaningful demonstrations of associated student learning for the public.

Potential Questions/Issues

- What do we mean by general education (e.g., first two years of college, foundational content knowledge and cognitive skills, liberal education) what do we want to test for?
- What are effective means of assessing general education for improvement of student learning that may also serve purposes of accountability reporting and institutional benchmarking?
- What assessment policies and practices are necessary to facilitate transfer of credit (1) in courses where specific exit competencies have been specified, (2) in courses where specific exit competencies have not been specified, and (3) in the case of the 42-hour block?

d. Major Fields

Assessment in major fields ensures that institutions in Missouri are maintaining alignment with their fields of specialization, adequately preparing students to enter their chosen profession, and providing good stewardship of state resources.

Potential Questions/Issues

3. What kinds of reporting will provide sufficiently useful information for public policy as indicated in Imperatives for Change? What kinds of reporting and collaborative assessment and course configuration might extend beyond the IFC requirements. **e. Licensure and Certification**

Results of licensure and certification also serves to prove good stewardship of state resources and indication that students are prepared to enter fields with criterion-referenced licensure.

Potential Questions/Issues

- Are licensures and certificates comparable across fields? What is viable reporting?
- How do we gain more data from outside licensure programs?
- What kinds of reporting will provide sufficiently useful information for public policy as indicated in Imperatives for Change? What kinds of reporting and collaborative assessment and course configuration might extend beyond the IFC requirements.

f. Graduate level Access, Admission and Completion

Missouri higher education has a significant interest in producing undergraduates ready for graduate study. Many assessment issues related to undergraduate access and completion may be related to graduate transition point as well.

Potential Questions/Issues

- Other than GRE Scores what kinds of assessments and reporting might inform the preparedness of undergraduates for graduate study?

g. Workforce Competency

Imperatives for Change asks for assessments of collegiate graduate performance in the workplace. Workplace assessments provide useful information to benchmark program

content and student achievement with the knowledge and skills required by employers.

Potential Questions/Issues

- What kinds of reporting will provide sufficiently useful information for public policy as indicated in Imperatives for Change? What kinds of reporting and collaborative assessment and course configuration might extend beyond the IFC requirements.
- What kinds of useful feedback for institutions and programs, recent graduates, and state reporting would be helpful?

4. **Encourage and facilitate qualitative advancement of institution specific assessment practices through collaborative conferences, seminars, pilot projects, benchmark data collection and dissemination etc.**
5. **Provide for a strategy for further review of assessment policy and evaluation of assessment practices across the state.**

Assessment Culture and Practices Across Missouri Postsecondary Institutions

(A draft report by the LAMP Assessment Practices Subcommittee)

Executive Summary

The Assessment Practices Subcommittee reviewed secondary and postsecondary assessments currently in use in Missouri. This draft report, *Assessment Culture and Practices across Missouri Postsecondary Institutions* reflects upon the infrastructure and general role of assessment practices at Missouri institutions. Below is a summary of the major points outlined in the subcommittee's report.

What do we know about current Missouri practice in assessment?

- Stakeholders who perceive sustainability as unlikely are reluctant to invest in one policy or process.
- Institutions would like MDHE to provide more data, research, and coordination on important assessment issues, especially placement.
- Institutional assessment officers believe collaboration around best practices and statewide policies can increase the reliability, validity, and application of assessment.
- All institutions are engaged in some form of student assessment, though there is great variation in the instruments used, administrational infrastructure, and the extensiveness to which individual students are assessed.
    - Institutions assessing students' basic skills in general education use one of five instruments: CAAP, CLA, MAPP, C-BASE, or Work Keys.
    - Assessment within the academic major is primarily done using ETS Major Field tests and/or institutionally designed cap stone courses and comprehensive course examinations.
    - Concerning placement most community colleges use COMPASS.
    - Assessment of affective development, attitudinal surveys, institutional effectiveness, and first year student experience is sporadic.
- Institutions have made expansion of assessment programs on their campus a priority through multiple avenues and by engaging critical stakeholders:
    - Institutions have expanded their assessment programs to fulfill mission objectives and respond to public calls for increased transparency.
    - Assessment has become a central aspect of institutional mission and practice.
    - As a criterion of success, the role of faculty has become central not only to the implementation, but also the planning, structure, and decision making process of assessment on campuses.
    - Almost all institutions believe that faculty are invested in assessment but this relationship needs continual nurturance and development.

- Technological advances (dashboards, assessment software like Foliotek and Weave) have increased the participation in and effectiveness of assessment on campuses, but more investment is needed in this area.

Preface

This document is a preliminary report outlining the state of assessment culture and practices of post-secondary institutions across Missouri. The report was commissioned by the Learning Assessment in Missouri Postsecondary Education Advisory Council (LAMP) and produced by the Assessment Practices Subcommittee (APS). LAMP's charge focuses upon analysis of current and future needs in Missouri to increase the quality of education through learning assessment. This report was commissioned to provide context for LAMP's policy recommendations to the Commissioner of Higher Education.

Assessment of student learning is an evolving discipline. While institutions draw from a common battery of instruments to measure student learning, student satisfaction, instructional quality and institutional effectiveness; the methodology, analytical perspective and application of the information varies significantly across institutions. Further, many important aspects of assessment are not related to the instruments but to infrastructure, stakeholder attitudes, and relation to state, federal, and accreditation requirements.

Missouri has a long and productive history encouraging assessment and collaboration across institutions. Along with the critical contributions of the Missouri Assessment Consortium (MAC) found in 1991, strategic plans and reporting have consistently contained explicit calls for improvement in student learning and relevant assessment measures. Improvement of student learning and effective assessment for instructional improvement and accountabilities are paramount priorities for the Department of Higher Education. The strategic plan, Imperatives for Change reinforces these priorities by reporting performance on general education, major fields, and licensure and certification examinations.

The depth and breadth of assessment practices should not be underestimated. At the time of LAMP's inception in October 2008 scarce information about these assessment practices was available. This report begins to address this deficit. The report will draw upon two primary sources, 1) the Missouri Assessment Instruments Survey (MAIS) which included questions concerning the availability of an assessment plan and solicited information about the use of over 60 different types of assessment instruments, and 2) the Survey of Assessment Culture (SAC) concerned with information related to the infrastructure, attitudes, and general assessment practices. Additionally, respondents were invited to share opinions about the effectiveness of current state policies related to assessment, and how they might be improved[1].

Assessment Planning and Institutional Mission

Almost all institutions have a formal plan that is publicly accessible while only about half of these plans are available on the institution's website. The SAC further inquired about what kinds of assessment are explicitly referenced in the assessment plan. Of the 21 institutions with an

[1] For more information on the methodology of the SAC and MAIS data see Appendix A.

available plan 100% referenced institutional level assessment, 90% program level, 81% course level, and 71% entrance or preparation level assessment.

Formal Assessment Plan Available						
Sector	**Formal Plan**		**On Website**		**Publicly Accessible Plan**	
Independent	8	89%	3	33%	3	33%
Public 2-Year	11	79%	7	50%	10	91%
Public 4-Year	10	91%	8	73%	9	82%
Total	29	85%	18	53%	22	69%
Source	MAIS				SAC	

Formal plans play an important role in setting clear objectives and processes. For many institutions assessment is a vital component in ensuring that instructional and administrative decisions throughout the campus are aligned with stated mission ad values. Institutions:

- Have clearly connected assessment to their institutional mission, and it plays a clear part, at least on the institutional level, in evaluating performance.
- Have performed formalized linkages between the institutional mission and the assessment of program, department, course, or placement level student learning outcomes.

Infrastructure

Infrastructures that support assessment responsibilities vary greatly across institutions. Capabilities and limitations are related to more than just the value associated with assessment. Institutional size and budget, mission focus, and non-assessment organizational structure significantly shape the support systems of assessment. Respondents were asked to "describe the infrastructure and resource allocations dedicated to student learning and assessment (i.e. academic support centers, research offices, committees, strategic plan, faculty involvement, professional development, software applications etc.)".

- Management of assessment responsibilities varies. Ultimate responsibility is most often at a senior academic level or office of assessment or institutional research director; but faculty also play important roles as assessment directors.

Distribution of Primary Assessment Officers				
	Public 4 Year	Public 2 Year	Independent 4 Year	Total
Chief Academic Officer (CAO)	1	3	2	6
Assistant CAO	4			4
Office Director	4	5	2	11

Assistant Dean		1	3	4
Faculty		2	1	3
Distributed			1	1

***"Assistant" includes the title Associate as well**
***CAO includes the titles Vice President of Academic Affairs and Provost**
***Office Director includes directors of Assessment, Institutional Research, and Learning Centers**

- New software applications have been developed and implemented to improve tracking of the large amounts of data associated with student learning objectives. These applications are credited with significant improvement in data management, faculty and student participation, and instructional improvement.
- Innovative assessment activities and professional development opportunities increase faculty proficiency in assessment skills.
- Development of a detailed assessment strategy and infrastructure for many institutions has generally resulted in increased support and participation in assessment by all collegiate stakeholders.

Faculty Support

Achieving a quality assessment program requires the integration of supportive faculty in the process. Yet assessment may be a challenge for faculty concerned the additional responsibilities take away from teaching, add to the overall workload, and are not proven solutions. In spite of these often voiced concerns, all institutions reported broad faculty support and participation by faculty. The most negative comments suggested faculty support was "mixed", "growing but not everyone was on board", and "some faculty resistance, but not strong". Most assessment programs are beginning to rely upon faculty more and more through course embedded assessments and program reviews. Faculty are generally cited as integrated into the assessment program.

Student Support

Student support and participation also receives high remarks from survey respondents. Several cited high participation at assessment events and response rates for "optional" surveys like the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). While assessment has become a norm in much of student life, some have noticed that enthusiasm begins to flag as students become seniors. Others have heard students complain about passing a general education test in order to graduate.

Assessment Instruments

One primary function of the Missouri Assessment Instruments Survey was to inventory the instruments used for student learning improvement and other levels of assessment. The APS created a follow up survey to this study which moves beyond a simple inventory requesting information on methodological implementation, collection and analysis strategies, and how the data is used. This survey is currently being field tested and may be employed later in 2009 to

contribute more information to this process. Below are some of the key findings from the MAIS responses[2]:

Instruments primarily used to measure the general cognitive ability of students and assess apprehension of general education learning outcomes were classified as "Basic Skills".

- Every Public Institution and all but one Independent institution indicated the use of a Basic Skills Assessment. Many also report these scores through the Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA).

Commonly Used General Education Assessments					
Sector	CAAP	CLA	MAPP	CBASE GE	Workkeys
Independent	0	2	2	5	
Public 2-Year	9	0	3	11	9
Public 4-Year	3	3	7	8	
Total	12	5	12	24	9

- Due to an earlier pilot project with the CLA in 2002-4 numerous institutions indicated past usage but now used the CAAP or MAPP. In fact, of reporting institutions, only 5 of the 15 institutions that had used CLA in the past 5 years intended to use this year or in the future.

Major Field exams are comprehensive instruments measuring undergraduate understanding of an entire field of study.

- All Public four year and many of the independent institutions use Educational Testing Service's (ETS) Major Field Tests.
- Many institutions also use institutionally designed capstone courses (65%) and comprehensive course examinations (50%) for critical fields assessment.

Placement examinations consist of instruments designed to evaluate an incoming student's basic skills for the primary purpose of collegiate course placement and advising.

- COMPASS is the preferred placement tools among the public community colleges (86%).
- In spite of growing remedial needs among baccalaureate conferring institutions, few indicated the use of Accuplacer, ASSET or COMPASS.

Many institutions supplement external evaluations of student cognitive capacity and growth with instruments used to measure adaptation to the higher education environment, religious identity, demographic, attitudinal and other subjective and affective dimensions. Many such instruments overlap in purpose with the following category of institutional effectiveness. While those primarily tasked to evaluate the affective development of students are used less frequently, several of these instruments were indicated by surveyed Missouri schools.

- Only 11 (32%) of respondent institutions indicated current use of an instrument assessing some dimension of affective development.

[2] Appendix D contains a copy of the final summary tables from the MAIS report.

- The Cooperative Institutional Research Program's Freshman and Your First College Year (YFCY) surveys were the most commonly used instruments. While only 7 institutions claimed current usage, another 8 had used one of them in the past and 4 are considering for future use.

Numerous instruments exist to evaluate student, faculty, staff, alumni, and other interest groups opinions or institutional experiences. Because of the quantity and variety of instruments available there is a larger pattern of disjointed use between the past, present, and future than among other categories.

- Most four year institutions have used the National Survey of Student Engagement at some time although only 29% currently participate and these are mostly Independent colleges. Among institutions not currently participating almost all are considering future use.
- After NSSE, Noel Levitz' surveys like the Student Satisfaction Surveys are the most commonly cited instrument.
- 50% of all institutions and 73% of public 4-year universities administer a self-designed senior exit survey.
- Institution designed measures of institutional effectiveness are also commonly employed among alumni, faculty, and staff.

Five final categories related specifically to First year and Prospective students: Health Fields Assessment, Data Warehouse participation, course evaluations, and miscellaneous are included in the appendix tables. While some of these tests overlap in purpose with earlier categories their unique populations (first year, health professionals etc) or scope of administration, warrant separation.

- 4 independent and 7 public institutions indicated using some kind of first year or prospective student survey apart from those targeting affective development.
- 44% of institutions passed information to the National Student Clearing House, while 5 of the 8 independent four year schools participated in the University and College Accountability Network (UCAN) and 6 of the 13 community college systems (43%) participated in the National Community Colleges Benchmarking Project (NCCBP).
- 8 (73%) of public four-year institutions use Portfolios or ePortfolios in Assessment work. These were not included in the basic skills category because their purpose an implementation varies greatly.

Perspectives on Assessment Needs

Assessment continues to be a developing discipline. Survey responses illustrate that assessment professionals at Missouri's institutions are committed to enhancing the methods and structure of assessment to advance the goal of improving student learning outcomes. This professional dedication is reinforced by the requirement of governing boards and accreditation bodies to consistently review assessment plans and implementation. It is not surprising then, that only one institution did not offer any ideas when asked "What is the single most important change or

improvement your institution could make to increase the quality and effectiveness of student learning assessment at your institution. Several central concerns dominated these responses.

- Institutions assessment and research offices need more personnel and resources. Many institutions lack the coordination of a full-time assessment coordinator would provide. Such a coordinator could implement programs on assessment and work with faculty on teaching, learning, and assessment. Along with this concept, smaller institutions would like more data and strategic support with the addition of a dedicated research office and support center for assessment training and resources. Beyond the infrastructure support personnel, other institutions admitted a need for a more structured and organized system of assessment overall.
- Implementation of assessment policy was also identified as an area for improvement. When explicitly asked about potential changes, some institutions suggested that assessment needs to become a normative component of the educational process for students and faculty. If students were required to complete general education requirements within a certain time frame, pre- and post-testing would allow for better measurement, intervention and assist in both student feedback and instructional development. Many course and program assessment practices are the responsibility of faculty without significant oversight, incentives or consequences for –non-completion. A more defined process requiring course embedded assessments, structured review and feedback, and program review would enhance the success of students at learning outcomes. The next step then is to close the loops in assessment programs by ensuring programs use the collected data to analyze and make responsible changes to the programs.

Structured assessment policies require not only significant participation by faculty, but embedding the practices in the experiences and knowledge of faculty. The reference group felt that overall support of assessment would derive from the group spending the time, effort, and resources to gain the support and understanding of reluctant faculty.

Best Practices in Missouri

Although improvement is always possible, Missouri institutions excel in many areas. Many institutional representatives highlight the capacity and need for MDHE to be a coordinator of data, information and best practices. Responding to this sentiment, the APS committee invited institutions to share some of their institution's best assessment practices. Three dominant issues underlie many of the solutions.

- The need for improved alignment between assessment practices and institutional mission and objectives
- How to increase faculty, staff, and student involvement and encourage an environment where assessment is normative
- Developing assessment practices with increased reliability, validity, and meaning.

Mission Alignment

Several institutions indicated they have initiatives to align student learning outcomes objectives with the institutional mission. More than one respondent claimed these initiatives as part of their AQIP[3] action project. Other institutions highlighted the benefit of requiring annual assessment plans for each department be reviewed by an assessment committee and relevant performance tracked. Implementing a five year review of programs also allows for a tighter alignment of mission and values with instruction and learning.

Assessment Participation

While well articulated plans, and alignment of objectives and missions are critical for continual improvement in student learning implementation is impossible without "buy-in" from staff, faculty and students. Several of the best practices cited by institutions demonstrate successful strategies to resolve this problem. The creation of assessment areas and dashboards on campus intranet has received a clear testimony of success. These kinds of enhanced communication strategies increase awareness, accessibility and utility of information, and even encourage timely completion of assessment plans. Other assessment tracking applications like Foliotek, Weave, and other Eportfolio programs also encourage participation from students and faculty and allow linkages with student information systems to enhance intervention capabilities.

Technological solutions are one strategy to increase participation and create a normative assessment culture. Other respondents underscored the benefits of structural and testing strategies. A smaller liberal arts college transferred everyday assessment responsibilities from a college committee to departmental assessment coordinators. For an institution without many administrative staff this created greater involvement of departments in the process. Another campus requires faculty to give at least one assignment to each class that aligns with established rubrics. These are then reviewed by an external committee to evaluate student learning and quality improvement.

Incentives and collaborative sharing can also be an effective strategy to increase participation in assessment testing and professional development. Several institutions have created Assessment Days where students and faculty are given class release to complete assessment instruments. One community college reports 75-90% student participation. Free food for lunch and door prizes appear irresistible for students. Similar assessment days for professional development and assessment showcases where departments can share best practices within the campus community may also increase faculty involvement and competence.

Assessment Quality

[3] The Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP) of the Higher Learning Commission is an alternative five-year re-accreditation process prioritizing continuous quality improvement processes with institutionally designed objectives and self-assessment.

In addition to clear articulation of assessment goals and participation from students and faculty, institutions must also develop processes that provide quality information to enhance student learning and program quality. Some related best practices include detailed analysis and feedback based on a global application of Major Field Tests, comprehensive testing for academic and writings skills, measuring student outcome performance at the entry, midway, and exit of collegiate life, general education capstone experiences and general education portfolios.

Institutional Perspectives on Assessment Related Policies

Missouri's on-going efforts to improve student learning and educational opportunity across the state have generated several polices related placement, remediation, curriculum alignment, transfer, and educational proficiency. These policies are fundamentally related to student learning improvement and will likely be affected by changes in assessment policy and practices. Institutional representatives were asked to provide feedback on the current status of these policies and perspectives on what was required for success.

Placement

Twelve institutions indicated they would like the state to move towards further standardization of a placement policy. Among these institutions eight explicitly requested an established range of placement scores. Eight of the remaining twenty-one institutions asserted that policy should prioritize individual institutional policies. Another common call was for MDHE to collect and disseminate placement data and best practices. Other significant suggestions included a desire for a standardized K-12 College Preparation instrument; a requirement that all sophomores and juniors take the ACT; mandating institutions to subscribe and implement clear entry level course expectations; and ensure the quality of dual credit programs.

Remedial and Developmental Education

Comments related to remedial and developmental education were limited. Only a few respondents indicated MDHE policy should move towards standardization or collaboration. These were balanced by a few explicitly expressing state policy should prioritize institutional policy. Institutions identified the need for MDHE to continue collaboration with the K-12 sector, increase the visibility of remediation and developmental needs, design a common placement instrument, collect and disseminate data and information, and ensure appropriate funding.

Curriculum Alignment Initiative (CAI)

Many institutions feel that the current CAI approach is adequate and should be maintained. There were several specific suggestions for a common course numbering system, as well as, increased alignments and cross validation between CAI competencies and other sectors like DESE, LAMP findings, and across institutions.

Transfer and 42 Hour General Education Block
The legacy of the 42 hour general education transfer policy continues to be an important issue for many institutions. Many of the community colleges would like to see the policy mandated so certified students need not worry about its transferability. Others suggest some revisions like increasing the block to 60 hours, creating a common assessment tool, and the development and alignment of general education competencies.

Assessment of Major Fields
Of all the policy areas, the strongest push for prioritizing institutional policies was related to Major Fields. While a few advocated for more standardization, and slightly more that MDHE encourage collaboration and dissemination of information, most cited the diversity and uniqueness of individual programs, and that assessment of Major Fields is already governed by accreditation and licensure. Other comments included the desire that state licensure and certification should be aligned and inherited from regional accreditation bodies, and for further alignment of DESE and DHE policies related to technical skills assessment. One institution suggested MDHE create incentives for rewarding institutions and students for success, and another for the integration of Workkeys into the state policy for community college assessment of major fields.

Institutional Suggestions for Consideration

An important early benefit of LAMP has been the sharing of problems, solutions, concerns, and ideas for the future as participants pay careful attention to common assessment issues and how public policy might assist institutions. An important role for MDHE is to facilitate collaboration among diverse institutions. The complexity of assessment practices and use necessitates such partnerships both to learn from others as well as address cross-institutional issues like transfer, college preparation, and current statewide policies. Responding to: "In which types of collaborative projects related to student learning assessment would your institution be interested in participating?" Institutions highlighted the collaborative advantage to:

- Sharing best practices and learn from the innovation and success of other institutions.
- Inform and influence policy issues that affect all institutions like dual credit, specific tasks and methods like measuring and advancing critical thinking, problem based assessments, reducing remedial coursework, partnering with secondary schools to reinforce preparation and transition, and creating CLA content specific practice examples.
- Sharing data for cross-institutional research into topics such as: the success of students at different placement score cutoffs, tracking of student transfers (e.g. the recent UMSL-STLCC transfer project), and following wage and employment data of graduates. When asked about how MDHE could improve institutional assessment capacity and quality data collection and support were central.
- Increase assessment quality with partners to cross-validate assessment tools and student learning objectives, especially around CAI. Partnering to create common discipline based goals and objectives or redesign entire curricular areas for student learning

improvement provides advantages for transferability and education commensurability. This approach allows for faculty autonomy in course design while promoting transfer and articulation.

In addition to providing data resources and facilitating collaboration, assessment officers asked for additional financial resources committed to assessment. Funding was requested for testing, resources, and to support the introduction of innovative methods, materials, training, and equipment to engage students more fully in learning activities.

Conclusion

Institutions in Missouri are committed to improving student learning. The growth of assessment practices and their integration into the administrative and pedagogical fabric of academic life reflect the importance of assessment to provide information for faculty guidance, curriculum modification, administrative performance review, institutional mission alignment, public accountability and to provide students with information about their academic growth. Institutions have expanded their assessment programs to fulfill mission objectives and in response to periodic waves of public interest with corresponding legislative mandates and civic initiatives. In recent years, the wealth of institutional and state-wide practices and policies has been reinforced by a quality improvement focus by the accreditation process of the Higher Learning Commission (HLC). The practice of assessing student learning in Missouri is improving as well.

Four dominant themes run throughout the responses to the survey. First, assessment has become a central aspect of the educational life, strategic plan, and mission of many postsecondary institutions. Second, there is an incredible diversity in the structure, hierarchy, and practice of assessment across Missouri postsecondary institutions. Third, in spite of this diversity there is a strong commitment by institutional assessment officers to build consensus and collaborate on assessment policies that may enhance student learning across the state and quality in each institution. Finally, continued investment in infrastructure and program development at the institution and state level is needed to achieve student learning improvement.

Institutions across Missouri are integrating continuous improvement into their institutional mission and objectives. Almost all institutions have deliberate institutional and program level assessment plans and nearly three-fourths have formal course and entrance or preparation policies. This commitment is beginning to be reflected in strategic, facility, and infrastructure planning. While the process is not complete at any one institution, the values of improving student learning are becoming a recognized language of educational administration and pedagogy.

While the principle of quality improvement becomes more pervasive, the implementation and even underlying philosophy varies from institution to institution. In most cases this variance

results from responses to institutional-specific values and conditions. This range of practice reflects the diversity in institutional culture across the state, as well as, the nascent development of assessment practice and the relative isolation in which solutions are created.

As assessment practice becomes more established, assessment professionals across the state highlight the opportunity for cooperation to further institutional and state-wide improvement. Respondents indicated a need for further sharing of best practices and discussion of common challenges. Many institutions recognize a need to create refined common policies to promote trust and address larger social educational problems like educational mobility, remediation and developmental education, and workforce preparation. Institutions also have reservations about any policies which might over-ride their flexibility to address these same issues within their local context and mission.

With a few exceptions, institutions would like MDHE to provide more data coordination and research related to important assessment issues, and more coordination of collaboration on these issues and with other organizations like DESE and state licensure boards. There is a particular recognition that collaboration can increase the reliability, validity, and meaning of current assessment practices.

In addition to the integration of assessment values into the mission and strategic plan, many institutions indicate that the success of assessment programs is tied to the prioritization of infrastructure needs by the administration, and the investment of faculty in the process. Technological advances (dashboards, assessment software, data warehouses, etc) have increased participation and the effectiveness of assessment on campuses, yet more investment is needed in this area. Faculty have become central not only to the implementation, but also the planning, structure and decision making process of assessment on many campuses. Because faculty are central to success, institutions have focused upon placing them at the center of the process. This investment needs to be continually nurtured and reinforced.

Survey responses show that some disagreement over the scope and nature of statewide assessment policy results from philosophical differences in the role of assessment or the relationship of the state and individual institutions. As the Assessment Practices Committee has discussed the survey results among themselves and with other faculty, institutional administration and assessment professionals, two further reservations also predominate. Faculty, as well as, institutional administration and assessment professionals, is wary of an increased workload associated with further assessment programming. Secondly, stakeholders may be reluctant to invest in one policy or process only to find their efforts quickly superseded by subsequent initiatives. Participants in this discussion insist that policy development must be mindful of these contexts.

The high survey response rate and investment in the LAMP process are testimonies to the spirit of cooperation thriving among assessment professionals across the state and their desire to enhance the discipline and benefit Missouri higher education. This report provides substantive evidence about current assessment practice and culture to inform future policy discussion. More importantly it demonstrates that both the need and will are present to improve student learning outcomes and the quality of higher education in Missouri.

Appendices

Document appendices can be downloaded from:
www.dhe.mo.gov/files/lampassessmentculturesurveyappendices.docx

Appendix A: SAC and MAIS Methodology
Appendix B: SAC De-Identified Responses
Appendix C: SAC Instrument
Appendix D: MAIS Survey Summary Tables

Communications Subcommittee Activities

The Communications Subcommittee developed and implemented a plan to foster communicating internally and externally by developing a LAMP Primer detailing the genesis of the LAMP Advisory Council, as well as creating two newsletters, in December 2008 and May 2009, updating participants and interested constituents on LAMP's activities.

Missouri Department of Higher Education

LAMP PRIMER

May 2009

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www.dhe.mo.gov/lamp.shtml

Upcoming Meetings

Full LAMP Committee:

- Monday, May 11th

Recent LAMP meetings:

Assessment Practices Subcommittee:

- January 2, 2009
- April 1, 2009

Literature Review Subcommittee:

- February 11, 2009
- March 16, 2009
- March 25, 2009
- April 1, 2009

Communications Subcommittee

- December 18, 2008

What is LAMP?

For some of you reading this message, you may be asking yourself: What exactly is LAMP? What is this group doing? What will be the impact of this work?

Recognizing that there are different levels of understanding about the work of LAMP, we have developed a primer that outlines the genesis and intent of the LAMP initiative.

What does LAMP stand for?

LAMP stands for, "Learning Assessment in Missouri Postsecondary Education". The Co-Chairs and organizers of the group considered several different names for the group, but specifically chose the acronym LAMP, because of its significance to the group in its role to provide information and data to policy makers to illuminate their decision-making processes and assist them in making informed policy decisions.

LAMP's Genesis

LAMP was initially conceptualized and initiated by the Missouri Department of Higher Education (MDHE) to dialogue and provide research, data, and recommendations to the Commissioner regarding assessment-related policy issues. Three institutional representatives from across the educational sectors were chosen to provide grassroots leadership, with support from MDHE staff. The intent of the group is to bring the experience and expertise of institutional representatives and practitioners to the table as the MDHE begins to consider appropriate ways that assessment be considered from a state-level perspective.

LAMP Drivers

Two initiatives underway at the state level have driven the creation of LAMP to consider assessment in the context of higher education policy: the Curriculum Alignment Initiative (CAI) and the CBHE statewide coordinated plan for higher education—Imperatives for Change.

The Curriculum Alignment Initiative, initiated in 2007, has produced competencies that outline knowledge and skills necessary for success in collegiate-level coursework and for completion of beginning general education courses. While CAI has undertaken the work to develop the competencies, it was the charge of the group was also to identify the policy impacts for a larger group of both content and assessment professionals, LAMP, to consider. To learn more about the history and current status of CAI, visit: http://www.dhe.mo.gov/casinitiative.html.

The Missouri's statewide coordinating plan for Higher Education, Imperatives for Change (IFC), was adopted by the Coordinating Board for Higher Education in July 2008. IFC provides a vision that has been developed collaboratively by Missouri's higher education institutions and the Coordinating Board for Higher Education. This plan will serve for the next three to five years as a foundation for prioritizing goals, justifying an increased resource base and allocating resources. This plan has, as one of its main goals, the need to assess student learning outcomes through multiple venues. LAMP has been charged with considering assessment surrounding these areas. To learn more about the IFC, visit: http://www.dhe.mo.gov/ifc.shtml.

LAMP Goals

The central goal of LAMP is to "thoroughly and thoughtfully explore assessment-related policy questions, based upon current practice and literature surrounding these issues, and provide the resulting considerations and recommendations to the Commissioner for use in the development of policy".

The work of LAMP has been shaped by three documents: the LAMP Charge, the LAMP Policy Guidance, and the LAMP inclusion values:

- The LAMP Charge was put forth by the Commissioner outlining the tasks and end report that LAMP was asked to deliver. This document framed the reason for forming the group, the importance of gathering professionals from across domains, and the specific areas for inclusion in the final report.
- The Policy Guidance document clarified the policy questions, driven by CAI and IFC, that the MDHE needs addressed in order to develop assessment related policy. These were meant to frame thinking and direct LAMP to specific policy areas.
- The LAMP Inclusion Values were developed by the LAMP members themselves, as the method and process for moving forward with the work of LAMP was under the purview of the group itself. This document seeks to articulate the process values the group would uphold in moving forward with the work.

These three documents have served to clarify and direct the actions of the group.

Why you should be interested in LAMP

LAMP is an opportunity to bring together individuals across the state with experience and expertise in multiple domains, and engage in dialogue and discussion with the express intent of bringing quality information to senior officials and upper-level administrators tasked with developing assessment-related policy. The LAMP process is an open opportunity to collaboratively identify the issues, challenges, and prospects for policy development. There is no expectation that participants must be in agreement, but that as a group LAMP can illuminate the critical issues for consideration in developing effective assessment policy for the state of Missouri.

LAMP: Myths and Facts

MYTH: *LAMP is making policy regarding assessment.*

FACT: LAMP does not make policy. The group is charged with exploring assessment practices in Missouri and professional assessment literature in order to provide information and recommendations to the Commissioner. This information will be utilized by MDHE to make informed, data-driven decision making and policy development. The Commissioner and MDHE Senior Staff develop policy in consultation with institutional leadership; these policy recommendations are then brought forth to the Coordinating Board for Higher Education for consideration and action.

MYTH: *LAMP will constrain or devalue institutional autonomy.*

FACT: LAMP's purpose is to critically look at the policy issues faced at the state level surrounding assessment and provide quality information to policy makers about the issues and concerns that need consideration in the development of thoughtful and effective policy. Members of the group are not being asked to all agree on the same thing; indeed, there are many opinions about possible policy solutions. It is the synergy of bringing together so many individuals that will allow LAMP to provide thorough and nuanced recommendations to these assessment policy issues.

MYTH: *The purpose of LAMP is to produce statewide assessment tests.*

FACT: LAMP is charged with examining best practices and professional literature, and dialoguing about that information as a group in order to identify areas of critical consideration and recommendations for policy consideration. There is not any foregone conclusion regarding assessment put forth to the group; MDHE is seeking information to better inform the development of policy and the appropriate use of assessment.

MYTH: *The MDHE will not take LAMP recommendations into consideration.*

FACT: The Commissioner and MDHE are committed to promoting collaborative dialogue and sharing policy development. LAMP was expressly initiated to utilize the expertise available in the state in the area of assessment, so that policy development and policy decisions might be better informed. It is of course, no guarantee that all recommendations will be acted upon, but they are of great value in bringing forth the critical areas of concern in the policy development process. Good policy cannot be created in a vacuum.

MYTH: *These issues are too big for LAMP to consider.*

FACT: Indeed, these are significant and complex issues for the group to consider, especially considering the breadth of the field of assessment. However, the MDHE has provided guidance as to the specific domains within assessment with which they are requesting assistance and information, as outlined in the Policy Guidance document. In addition, Commissioner Stein recently wrote a letter requesting the LAMP group specifically focus on completing recommendations regarding access and placement for the June 2009 report, with the understanding that LAMP would continue to work on other policy recommendations after that date

MYTH: *There is no way LAMP will be able to make recommendations by the June 2009 deadline.*

FACT: Early on, LAMP members, with support from the Commissioner, decided that given the number of policy areas that the MDHE was seeking input and recommendations on that it would be necessary to limit scope the first year. The group decided it would focus their attention initially on three areas of primary interest: access and placement; beginning general education course transfer; and college level general education. Work has progressed on all three fronts, but with the Commissioner's request to prioritize access and placement, it has been decided that LAMP will provide a report on progress to date for all group activities but provide a comprehensive analysis of critical issues and factors only in the area of access and placement for the June 2009 report.

MYTH: *Policies resulting from LAMP's recommendations will force all institutions to have the same admittance policies.*

FACT: As mentioned above, LAMP is not a policy making body, and therefore would not have the authority or power to enact such policies. In addition, since LAMP's members come from the institutions themselves, their dialogue and recommendations are based out of their experience and expertise as well as examination of practice and literature; it does not seem likely that LAMP recommendations would include such draconian suggestions.

Volunteer to Participate with LAMP

If you are interested in participating in LAMP, please email Angelette Prichett at angelette.prichett@dhe.mo.gov. Your experience and expertise are welcome!

LAMP Leadership

Rita Gulstad
Central Methodist University
Co-Chair, LAMP and
Assessment Practices Subcommittee

Jeff Lashley
Moberly Area Community College
Co-Chair, LAMP and
Communications Subcommittee

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LAMP UPDATE

Missouri Department of Higher Education

December 2008

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- Assessment Practices Subcommittee
- Literature Review Subcommittee

What's next?

LAMP Webpage:

Visit our new website for updates and committee resources

http://www.dhe.mo.gov/lamp.shtml

Upcoming Meetings

Full LAMP Committee:

- Date TBD, early 2009

Literature Review Subcommittee:

- December 5th, time (conference call)
- December 12, time (conference call)

Assessment Practices Subcommittee:

- December 10th, 9-10 am (conference call)

Communications Subcommittee

- December 18th, 10am-2pm (MDHE office, Jefferson City)

Welcome!

Welcome to our new Learning Assessment in Missouri Postsecondary Education (LAMP) newsletter. This newsletter will be sent to all LAMP members regularly to update you on whole group and subcommittee progress. We hope this will keep all participants informed and up to date on our activities.

Thank you for your participation and efforts to inform assessment policy in Missouri.

Next Steps Group: Bringing LAMP into Focus

At the conclusion of our first meeting in October, a small group called the "Next Steps" group was formed with the purpose of taking the dialogue from the first meeting and clarifying the purpose and direction of LAMP for the entire LAMP committee.

Through feedback from the MDHE and through several meetings, the Next Steps group was able to develop several documents that outline LAMP's goals and together form a set of framing documents that will guide our work:

1. **MDHE Policy Guidelines**: This document, developed by MDHE, clearly outlines the policy issues and questions that are a priority for the development of state-level policy in assessment. These areas that the LAMP group must focus in order to provide input and expertise to MDHE in developing informed policy.
2. **LAMP Charge**: This document was made available at our first meeting and clearly outlines the drivers for the formation of our group, the rationale for our structure, and the deliverables that the MDHE has asked for by June 1, 2009. If you have not had a chance to review this document in detail, please take this chance to review it now.
3. **LAMP Principles of Assessment Inclusion**: This document, developed initially by the Next Steps group and refined through all three subcommittees, establishes the values that will guide us as we move forward with our work. When new issues or questions arise, the group will consider these fundamental principles as the basis of our response.
4. **LAMP Timeline**: Also presented at our first meeting, this document outlines the critical time points in order to deliver the final report in June 2009.

To view these policy documents visit: http://www.dhe.mo.gov/lamp.shtml.

LAMP Subcommittee Updates

LAMP participants were asked to join one of the three working subcommittees that have been assigned all tasks associated with LAMP. For those few remaining participants who may not have chosen a group, it is important that you chose a group (or groups) in order to participate in LAMP activities. The large group will come back together later in the process to evaluate subcommittee reports and develop policy recommendations from that information.

Recent LAMP meetings:

Full LAMP Committee:

- October 27, 2008

Communications Subcommittee:

- November 18, 2008

Assessment Practices Subcommittee:

- November 20, 2008

Communications Subcommittee

- November 21, 2008

LAMP Leadership

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Moberly Area Community College
Co-Chair, LAMP and Communications Subcommittee

Michael Strait
University of Missouri-Kansas City
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Hillary Fuhrman
Research Associate, Academic Affairs

Jeffrey Smith
Research Associate, Academic Affairs

All three subcommittees met during the week of November 17-21; all three groups spent a portion of the meeting discussing and refining the framing documents before addressing group-specific work. Summary of major subcommittee activities are below; full meeting summaries are available at http://www.dhe.mo.gov/lampminutes.shtml.

Communications Subcommittee:

The Communication Subcommittee met on November 18th. Discussion included:

- overall communications strategy, including targeted messages and timing
- identification of both internal and external constituent groups
- recruiting additional members from unrepresented sectors
- keeping LAMP participants engaged
- keeping constituent groups informed, including assignment of liaison roles
- drafting a communications action plan
- developing a newsletter to keep all LAMP participants informed of subcommittee progress

The group will meet face-to-face on December 18th to finalize an action plan and progress on communication materials

Assessment Practices Subcommittee:

The Assessment Practices Subcommittee met on November 20th.

1. The group decided to move forward with an initial questionnaire to move beyond the MAIS survey to how institutions assess different levels and categories of their students, programs, units, etc., with a target to send out by mid-December.
2. Questions will focus on the policy areas of priority as outlined in the *MDHE Policy Guidance Document.*
3. The questions are currently under development and review
4. The group will finalize their action plan at their next meeting.

Literature Review Subcommittee:

The Communication Subcommittee met on November 21st. Activities included:

- Discussion of role and scope of the subcommittee
- Formation of literature review groups based on the policy areas of priority as outlined in the *MDHE Policy Guidance* document:
    - Access and Placement
    - Beginning General Education Course Transfer
    - College Level General Education
- The group will meet weekly via conference call to update on progress and develop and finalize an action plan by December 15th.

What's Next?

With work well underway in all three of the LAMP Subcommittees, each group will continue to work on their respective tasks and projects. LAMP Co-Chairs and MDHE staff will identify a date in early 2009 to come back together as a large group to update on progress and get feedback on subcommittee activities to date.

Missouri Department of Higher Education

LAMP UPDATE

May 2009

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Visit our website for updates and committee resources

www.dhe.mo.gov/lamp.shtml

Upcoming Meetings

Full LAMP Committee:

- Monday, May 11th

Recent LAMP meetings:

Assessment Practices Subcommittee:

- January 2, 2009
- April 1, 2009

Literature Review Subcommittee:

- February 11, 2009
- March 2, 2009
- March 16, 2009
- March 25, 2009
- April 1, 2009

Communications Subcommittee

- December 18, 2008

LAMP Leadership

Hello!

Welcome to the second installment of the Learning Assessment in Missouri Postsecondary Education (LAMP) newsletter. This newsletter is sent to all LAMP members and other stakeholders on a periodic basis to provide updates on whole group and subcommittee progress. We hope this will keep all participants informed and up to date on our activities.

Thank you for your continued participation and efforts to inform assessment policy in Missouri.

What is LAMP?

For some reading this newsletter, you may be asking yourself: What exactly is LAMP? What is this group doing? What will be the impact of this work?

Recognizing that there are different levels of understanding about the work of LAMP, we have developed a primer that outlines the genesis and intent of the LAMP initiative. The LAMP Primer is available at: www.dhe.mo.gov/LAMP.

LAMP Subcommittee Updates

The LAMP Subcommittees have developed action plans and have been working to achieve identified goals. The Assessment Practices and Literature Review Subcommittees, in particular, have been hard at work in their respective groups. These efforts have been carried forth by core groups of dedicated participants. The information gathered and synthesized by the Subcommittees will serve as a foundation as the large group develops recommendations for the Commissioner by June 1, 2009. See below for updates on Subcommittee activities.

Assessment Practices Subcommittee:

The Assessment Practices Subcommittee has met several times over the last few months. In January 2009 they fielded a survey of assessment practices to all institutions in Missouri and have worked the past several months to code and analyze their results.

The Assessment Practices Subcommittee is working to finalize their draft report which reflects upon the infrastructure and general role of assessment practices in Missouri institutions, as reported in the Survey of Assessment Culture distributed to institutions in January 2009. The survey also collected additional information from

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institutions regarding their opinions and policy recommendations related to a breadth of relevant assessment issues. This information will also be used to inform the subcommittee's final report.

Literature Review Subcommittee:

The Literature Review Subcommittee continues to work on finalizing the review of national best practices and has established an online database for review and annotation of assessment-related literature and a collaborative writing process for the production of their report.

Communications Subcommittee:

The Communication Subcommittee met on December 18th, 2008. The group developed an action plan to keep both internal and external constituents informed and identified next steps; however, issues surrounding budgeting issues at the state level in early 2009 required that work with outside constituents be slowed to allow focus on financial discussions.

Recently, the group developed a "LAMP Primer" and is working to keep LAMP participants engaged and informed through avenues such as this newsletter.

Policy Focus

With much of the foundation for policy recommendations set forth, the next step will focus on development of recommendations to be delivered to the Commissioner. Given the current policy environment, Commissioner Stein has asked that while the group should continue to develop policy recommendations in all initial focus areas, it should give priority to recommendations regarding access and placement into postsecondary education. The focus placed here will allow the CBHE to develop informed policy as statewide discussions and policy development has already begun. LAMP will continue its work to provide substantive information to assist in policymaker decision-making in all areas. The letter from Commissioner Stein outlining this request to LAMP is available at: www.dhe.mo.gov/LAMP.

What's Next?

With the work of the subcommittees nearing completion, the next step is for the subcommittees to meet together as a large group to consider the information gathered and its impact on the final recommendations to the Commissioner. The May 11th meeting will provide a forum for discussion and development of the June 1st report.

Principles, Research, and Literature in Student Learning Assessment

(A draft report by the LAMP Literature Review Subcommittee)

Executive Summary

The Literature Review Subcommittee reviewed the research and professional best practices as presented in the literature. Below is an outline of the major points as outlined in the subcommittee's report.

What do we know about fundamental principles of assessment?

- Professionally accepted principles of assessment should guide assessment policy development. A summary of central principles include, but are not limited to:
    - Assessment is not an end in itself but a vehicle for educational improvement.
    - Assessment should be based on multiple measures appropriate to the course, program, and institutional mission and goals.
    - Assessment fosters wider improvement when representatives (e.g., faculty, administrators, assessment professionals) from across the educational community are involved.
    - Assessment is most likely to lead to improvement when it is part of a larger set of conditions that promote change.
    - Assessment should be an ongoing cumulative process.
    - The data collected should be longitudinal and should include both quantitative and qualitative elements.
    - Assessment programs should be based on reliable research and proven practices.
    - Assessment instruments and methods should be continually evaluated to determine their utility in the assessment process.
    - Assessment is linked to strategic planning and program review processes within the institution.
    - Through assessment, educators meet responsibilities to students and to the public.
- There are multiple purposes of assessment. They include:
    - Improvement of student learning
    - Improvement of program of instruction
    - Improvement of educational effectiveness of the instruction
    - Documenting student learning, program improvement, and educational effectiveness of outside stakeholders—Accountability
- Assessment should be chosen to primarily serve continuous improvement in student learning, but with the ability to serve additional purposes, e.g., program improvement, accountability.
    - Assessment chosen primarily for the purpose of accountability does not necessarily support other types of assessment (e.g. student learning).

- Assessment differs from evaluation, though assessment includes multiple acts of evaluation:
    - Evaluation is a judgment in relation to a goal or standard.
    - Assessment is a process of measuring performance and providing documentation of growth or feedback for improvement.
- There are multiple levels of assessment that concern different units of analysis:
    - Course-Level Student Learning Assessment: measurement of specific intended student learning outcomes from a course; can be formative (throughout the course) or summative (end-of-course).
    - Program-Level Student Learning Assessment: student learning outcomes upon completion of a program of study; can take place throughout a program or as end-of-program exams.
    - Institution-Level Student Learning Assessment: general competencies expected to be attained by some or all students by the end of their programs; the most common example is assessment of general education skills.
- In addition, there are also levels of performance that refer to the attainment of the ability identified as a learning outcome.
    - Levels of performance lie along a continuum of ability or achievement, and different levels of performance may be expected for the same learning outcome over time (e.g., a high school student may perform at an exceptional level on a particular learning outcome that would not be considered acceptable at the postsecondary level).
    - Levels of performance must be included in articulation of learning outcomes.

What do we know about access and placement?

- While society is well on its way to the goal of universal access to postsecondary education, large numbers of high school graduates enter postsecondary education institutions unprepared for college-level study—federal estimates indicate 40% of students take at least one remedial course.
- The purpose of assessment to access and placement issues is to ensure effective placement decisions that increase academic success.
- While high school students who complete "college preparatory" curriculum are generally better prepared for college, far too many of these students need developmental/remedial education.
- Misalignment of course material, tests, and standards between high school and college remains a major challenge.
- A promising policy in other states has been the use of college placement exams as diagnostic tools to provide early feedback to high school students about progress toward college readiness.
- Assessment for placement into collegiate-level coursework involves diagnosis of a test score that is correlated with a reasonable chance of success in a particular course.
    - Oklahoma has seen success with this use of placement with a reduction of in remedial enrollments since the establishment of statewide minimum ACT "first

cut score" for access to collegiate-level coursework, with institutions given autonomy to place students who fall below state standards.

- The Literature Review group came to the follow guidelines based on the above knowledge:
    - Focus on an essential set of standards that are most important for future success in college. The common expectation should be for all high school students to take a rigorous core curriculum, regardless of plans for college.
    - There must be clear performance expectations of college readiness so that students, parents, and educators receive consistent messages about what it means to be prepared for college.
    - Early monitoring and intervention with middle school students must occur to keep them on target and/or diagnose weak areas that must be addressed.
    - The ability to compare standardized measures across institutions and peer groups can lead to clearer standards and positive outcomes.

Introduction

The Learning Assessment in Missouri Postsecondary Education (LAMP) Advisory Council was created to consider statewide issues surrounding learning assessment in Missouri and to make policy recommendations to the Commissioner of Higher Education. The purpose of this literature review is to present a review of learning assessment research and best practices literature upon which the LAMP Advisory Council may base its recommendations to the Commissioner. Learning assessment research is highly contextual and few, if any, universals apply. To necessarily narrow the scope of this work, the LAMP Advisory Council chooses to focus on issues and policy questions that are important to the state of Missouri and were foundational to the creation of LAMP: access and placement (student preparation), beginning general education course transfer, and college-level general education. National and state-level concerns with remedial education require that LAMP first prioritize policy recommendations in access and placement. This report will examine the methodology used by the Literature Review Subcommittee of LAMP for conducting the literature analysis, provide a brief primer on the principles and purposes of assessment, provide an analysis of the literature as it relates to access and placement, and outline conclusions for increasing student success based upon the literature

Methodology

To perform this review of research and best practices, searches were conducted in three distinct areas of research publication and in the professional literature associated with each of the focus areas. The three distinct areas of research publication were (1) learning assessment policy research, (2) learning assessment research, and (3) learning research.

Shavelson, writing about alternative designs for examining student outcomes from telecourses, observed that evaluators have a wide range of alternative designs from which to choose: "Which choice is best for a given situation depends on many factors, not the least of which are the types of decisions (and decision makers) on which the evaluation focuses and the feasibility of implementing the design." (Shavelson, R. et al, 1986, p. v) In a later section, an important distinction will be drawn between evaluation and assessment in the context of this review, but the observation applies just as much to the design of learning outcomes assessment as it does to program evaluation.

Learning Assessment Policy Research

Research on learning assessment policy addresses the effectiveness of assessment policy in achieving its goals. An extensive literature review of learning assessment policy research was published by the National Center for Postsecondary Improvement (NCPI) in 1997. NCPI was a collaborative research partnership of Stanford University, the University of Pennsylvania, and the University of Michigan. While NCPI ceased operations in 2004, its research findings, publications, and toolkits continue to be available at http://www.stanford.edu/group/ncpi/, maintained by the Stanford Institute for Higher Education Research. In matters of learning assessment policy research, the related publications of NCPI have served as a base. Literature searches original to this review will be limited to the time period, 1997 to the present. Sources of learning assessment policy research mentioned in the NCPI "Benchmarking" report will be searched for new publications since 1997. These sources include federal agencies, state governments, regional accrediting associations, voluntary associations of colleges and universities, the National Governor's Association (NGA), State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO), Education Commission of the States (ECS), and the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS).

Learning Assessment Research

Research on learning assessment addresses the effectiveness of assessment strategies, techniques, and instruments in improving student learning, informing academic program improvement, and meeting accountability requirements. For example, when feedback is given, timely and actionable feedback improves learning much more than simple knowledge of results (Nyquist, 2003).

Learning Research

Research on learning includes both basic and applied research on how people learn. In this review, the emphasis is on learning research that may inform learning assessment practices and policies. For example, researchers have found that testing enhances learning more than additional study of the material, even in the absence of feedback (Roediger & Karpicke, 2006).

In addition to published research on learning assessment policy, learning assessment, and learning, this review covers professional literature on best practices within the focus areas. Beginning in 1989, the bimonthly publication, Assessment Update, has covered developments in higher education assessment. Other periodicals that regularly report on best practices in learning assessment in postsecondary education include Change, The National Teaching & Learning Forum, and AAC&U's Liberal Education and Peer Review.

Assessment 101

The term "assessment" has many meanings in ordinary language and in various technical languages. Assessment in this context means student learning outcomes assessment in postsecondary education.

Many recent books and articles on assessment in higher education date the beginning of current concerns with assessment in higher education in the United States from the 1980s. Frequently cited as prompts are publication of A Nation at Risk (NCEE, 1983), Involvement in Learning

(NIE, 1984), Time for Results (NGA, 1986), and Boyer's College (1987). A good case can be made that these and other publications during this time stimulated a new national concern with assessment for accountability purposes, but assessment as a means of measuring and improving learning in higher education has a much longer history. By some accounts, assessment as a means of measuring learning was practiced as early as the 4th century, B.C.E., during the Han Dynasty in China (Biggs, J., 2001). However, the purpose of assessment then, and in contemporary times through the 1940s, was primarily to screen and select those most capable, or incapable, of learning. Informal assessment to improve learning is of course as at least as old as recorded accounts of teaching, made famous in Plato's accounts of Socrates. But the contemporary use of formal assessment to improve learning in higher education might be dated from the beginnings of the competency-based reform movement in higher education during the late 1960s and early 1970s (Grant, G. et al, 1979).

Principles of Assessment

This section on principles of assessment must begin by acknowledging and seeking to build upon the document, Guiding Principles of Assessment (GPA), developed by the Missouri Assessment Consortium (MAC) in 1992. The MAC statement of assessment philosophy opens with the following assertion: "Assessment should be guided by clearly stated, externally validated student learning processes and outcomes that flow from and support the institutional mission." In other words, assessment should be guided by what we know about how people learn and focused on learning objectives that flow from and support the mission of the institution in which assessment takes place. While this opening statement asserts that principles of assessment should be guided by principles of learning, the clear emphasis of the opening paragraphs of the MAC GPA is on preserving the autonomy of degree-granting postsecondary institutions. This emphasis is best understood in light of the historical context of the document's creation, a time in which pressure from federal and state government was building on public institutions of higher education to provide more evidence that students were learning what institutions said they should be learning and were learning.

The MAC GPA identifies three purposes of assessment: "A) improvement of student learning and instruction, B) accomplishment of institutional mission, and C) accountability for achievement of educational goals." Irrespective of purpose, the following are identified as important features of assessment:

- Assessment should be based on multiple measures appropriate to the program and institution
- The data collected should be longitudinal and should include both quantitative and qualitative elements
- Assessment programs should be based on reliable research and proven practices
- assessment instruments and methods should be continually evaluated to determine their utility in the assessment process

Several organizations have created lists of principles of assessment. Perhaps the most frequently cited in higher education are those published originally in 1996 by the American Association of Higher Education (AAHE). AAHE was dissolved in 2005 but AAHE's 9 principles of assessment can still be found on many assessment websites. The following abbreviated list is

adapted from a more complete version retrieved from
http://www.facet.iupui.edu/resources/AAHE%20Principles.pdf

1. The assessment of student learning begins with educational values. Assessment is not an end in itself but a vehicle for educational improvement.
2. Assessment is most effective when it reflects an understanding of learning as multidimensional, integrated, and revealed in performance over time. Learning is a complex process. It entails not only what students know but what they can do with what they know; it involves not only knowledge and abilities but values, attitudes, and habits of mind that affect both academic success and performance beyond the classroom.
3. Assessment works best when the programs it seeks to improve have clear, explicitly stated purposes. Assessment is a goal-oriented process. It entails comparing educational performance with educational purposes and expectations — those derived from the institution's mission, from faculty intentions in program and course design, and from knowledge of students' own goals.
4. Assessment requires attention to outcomes but also and equally to the experiences that lead to those outcomes. Information about outcomes is of high importance; where students "end up" matters greatly. But to improve outcomes, we need to know about student experience along the way — about the curricula, teaching, and kind of student effort that lead to particular outcomes. Assessment can help us understand which students learn best under what conditions; with such knowledge comes the capacity to improve the whole of their learning.
5. Assessment works best when it is ongoing not episodic. Assessment is a process whose power is cumulative. Though isolated, "one-shot" assessment can be better than none, improvement is best fostered when assessment entails a linked series of activities undertaken over time.
6. Assessment fosters wider improvement when representatives from across the educational community are involved. Student learning is a campus-wide responsibility, and assessment is a way of enacting that responsibility.
7. Assessment makes a difference when it begins with issues of use and illuminates questions that people really care about.
8. Assessment is most likely to lead to improvement when it is part of a larger set of conditions that promote change.
9. Through assessment, educators meet responsibilities to students and to the public. There is a compelling public stake in education. As educators, we have a responsibility to the public stakeholders that support or depend on us to provide information about the ways in which our students meet goals and expectations. But that responsibility goes beyond the reporting of such information; our deeper obligation — to ourselves, our students, and society — is to improve. Those to whom educators are accountable have a corresponding obligation to support such attempts at improvement.

(Authors of the AAHE Principles included Alexander W. Astin, Trudy W. Banta, K. Patricia Cross, Elaine El-Khawas, Peter T. Ewell, Pat Hutchings, Theodore J. Marchese, Kay M. McClenney, Marcia Mentkowski, Margaret A. Miller, E. Thomas Moran, and Barbara D. Wright.)

A third set of principles often cited are those published as the National Association of State University and Land Grant Colleges' (NASULGC) "Statement of Principles on Student Outcomes Assessment" Interestingly, these principles are not posted on the NASULGC website. The NASULGC principles state that programs for student outcomes assessment should:

1. focus primarily on the effectiveness of academic programs and the improvement of student learning and performance;
2. be developed in collaboration with the faculty;
3. be appropriate to the particular mission and goals of the institution;
4. use multiple methods of assessment;
5. be fiscally conservative and not impose costly programs on institutions;
6. be linked to strategic planning and program review processes within the institution.

The published lists of assessment principles above focus primarily on program-level and institution-level assessment, and assume a high level of knowledge of, and experience with, the terms of discourse and literature on assessment in higher education. The following "Assessment 101" section may help those who have not participated in that discourse or read extensively in that literature.

Purposes of Assessment

The appropriateness of any method of assessment or assessment instrument depends on the purpose of assessment. The following purposes of assessment are considered in this review:

1. Improve Student Learning
2. Improve Program of Instruction
3. Improve Educational Effectiveness of the Institution
4. Document Student Learning, Program Improvement, and Educational Effectiveness to Outside Stakeholders (Accountability)

Over the past twenty years, assessment for the purpose of accountability has become a dominating concern in higher education. The problem, many observers now agree, is that methods of assessment and assessment instruments developed or chosen solely or primarily for purposes of accountability do not necessarily serve to improve student learning, improve programs of instruction, or improve educational effectiveness at the institutional level. The challenge is to develop or choose methods of assessment and assessment instruments primarily for the purpose of improving student learning that can also serve purposes of program improvement, educational effectiveness of the institution, and accountability to external stakeholders.

Differentiating Assessment from Evaluation

In many contexts, no distinction is made between the meanings of assessment and evaluation. In this context, it is important to distinguish assessment from evaluation. Assessment is a process of measuring a performance or product of learning and giving feedback which documents growth and provides directives to improve the performance or product. Evaluation is a judgment or determination of the quality of a performance or product in relation to a goal or standard. Some efforts to distinguish assessment from evaluation attempt to define them in ways that make them

seem mutually exclusive (e.g., Parker, P. et al, 2001). Some efforts force the meanings of assessment and evaluation apart by equating the former with formative evaluation and the latter with summative evaluation as first distinguished by Michael Scriven (Scriven, M., 1967). In this context, it would be most accurate to say that assessment includes multiple acts of evaluation, but is more than evaluation. Documentation of growth and actionable feedback to improve learning are as essential to assessment as is evaluation.

Assessment for/as Learning versus Assessment of Learning

Distinguishing assessment "for" learning or assessment "as" learning from assessment "of" learning is perhaps not necessary if the previous differentiation of assessment from evaluation is already recognized and accepted. Unfortunately, in practice, assessment is not routinely differentiated from evaluation and assessment "of" learning is taken to mean the same thing as summative evaluation, a judgment of a performance or product at the conclusion of a learning experience. This has led to the development of the distinction in assessment literature between assessment "for/as" learning and assessment "of" learning, with assessment "for/as" learning intended to mean the formative process that here we equate with assessment. But the phrasing of assessment "for" learning and assessment "as" learning can still contribute extra meaning even when it is recognized and accepted that all assessment is formative by definition. The valuable extra meaning supplied by using the prepositions "for" or "as" is the intention that the assessed demonstration of learning is itself a learning experience, or that the complete process of assessment-performance, evaluation, documentation, feedback-be as brief and tightly connected as possible. Assessment of a "real-world" performance or performance in a high fidelity simulation of a "real-world" setting would be an example of assessment for learning. Learning to lengthen or deepen a meditative state using biofeedback equipment, would be an example of a very brief and tight performance-evaluation-documentation-feedback loop.

Levels of Assessment and Levels of Performance

Levels of Assessment. It is also important to identify and distinguish levels of assessment and levels of performance because the term "level" is used in both cases but means something very different. By levels of assessment, we are referring to course, program, and institutional, levels of student learning assessment data collection or data analysis.

1. Course-Level Student Learning Assessment

All courses have, or should have, specific intended student learning outcomes. For example, students in an Introduction to Macroeconomics course need to be able to calculate real GDP. The assessment of course-level learning outcomes can take place throughout the course and can be measured through a very wide variety of typically faculty-based tools such as quizzes, tests, papers, portfolios, journals and class assignments or other artifacts. Formative course-level assessment requires multiple in-course assessments to improve student learning. End-of-course assessments, such as a final exam, or final paper or project evaluation, are summative with respect to the individual student's learning in that specific course, but can be formative if part of a sequence of courses in which the student's learning in later courses can be improved based on the feedback received in a previous end-of-course assessment.

2. Program-Level Student Learning Assessment
All degree programs in postsecondary education have, or should have intended program-level student learning outcomes. For example, students in a Bachelor of Science in Nursing program should, by the time they graduate from the program, be able to explain and implement triage to a patient. The assessment of program-level learning outcomes can take place throughout a student's program in more than one course. End-of-program exams are sometimes also referred to as learning assessments, but the value of such exams is obviously limited to program improvement. In other words the end-of-program exam, just like end-of-course exams, are summative with respect to the particular student tested; they are potentially formative only with respect to improvement of the academic program. When program competencies are tracked throughout a student's coursework, the college typically has a paper or electronic tracking system to insure sufficient success on program competencies. Program-level learning outcomes can also be assessed at the end of the program. And end-of-program exam may be locally developed by program faculty or it may be a standardized exam given to students graduating from similar programs across the state or nation.

3. Institution-Level Student Learning Assessment
The most common examples of institution-level student learning assessment are assessments of the general education program required of undergraduate students across many programs, and proficiency assessments of general competencies expected to be attained by some or all students across many programs by the end of their program. For an example of the first type, at or near the time that a student completes all or most of her or his general education requirements for a two-year or four-year degree program, the student might be required to take one or more general education assessments, such as a writing assessment and an assessment of critical thinking or broad content knowledge, that target intended learning outcomes of the general education program. Such assessments could be formative with respect to the student, if the student gets feedback that the required level of performance has not been achieved and there are opportunities for the student to improve. Even if summative for the student, such a general education assessment can be formative for the institution if the results are used to continuously improve the general education program. Examples of the second type, assessments that are taken by students across many programs at the very end of their academic programs may be similar to general education assessments but calibrated to higher levels of performance, or they may be substantively different than assessments given to assess outcomes in the general education program, such as integration of multiple competencies in a field of specialization.
Some colleges refer to their college-wide, end-of-program learning objectives as "Common Student Learning Outcomes" or as "Common Student Abilities", etc.

Some regard institutional performance indicators such as retention rates and graduation rates, as part of institution-level assessment, but such indicators are not assessments of learning. Our review is limited to assessment of student learning.

Levels of Performance. By levels of performance we are referring the level of attainment of the ability identified as a learning outcome. For example, it is very common to see competencies in communication and critical thinking identified as key learning outcomes at different levels of education from high school to graduate school. But for any general competency, there is a continuum of ability or achievement and we do not expect the same level of performance in high

school that we expect in earning an associates degree, a baccalaureate degree, a master's degree, or a doctoral degree. There is of course overlap in the levels of performance a student may demonstrate. A high school student may perform at a level that is exceptional in terms of our expectations for high school and that would be adequate if not exceptional at a collegiate level.

The two important points here are: (1) to understand the different meanings of levels of assessment and levels of performance, and (2) to understand that levels of performance must be included in the articulation of learning outcomes at all levels of assessment and levels of education before appropriate assessments can be developed or chosen.

Assessment Related to Access and Placement

While it might seem that, as a society, we are well on our way to achieving the goal of universal access to postsecondary education, large numbers of high school graduates enter postsecondary education institutions unprepared for college-level study (Greene & Foster, 2003). David Conley defines college readiness as "the level of preparation a student needs in order to enroll and succeed—without remediation—in a credit-bearing general education course at a postsecondary institution that offers a baccalaureate program or transfer to a baccalaureate program" (Conley, 2007, p. 5). However, federal estimates indicate that 40% of admitted and enrolled students take at least one remedial course (National Center for Education Statistics, 2004). Even ten years ago, according to Breneman & Haarlow (1997), the costs of remediation were estimated at $1 billion or more at public institutions alone. It would seem a "no brainer" that states would look for ways to reduce the need for remediation, but while many states have assessment policies governing assessment of college readiness at entry (at least in English and math) and placement, few have policies in place to address the problem of preparation.

The purpose for assessment, as it relates to access and placement of students into collegiate-level or pre-collegiate level coursework, is to assist institutional personnel in making course placement decisions that will help students become academically successful. Access to collegiate-level coursework refers to assessing the basic skills of incoming students. Placement refers to the enrollment of students into collegiate-level coursework (credit-bearing coursework toward degree attainment), or pre-collegiate level coursework (remedial or development courses that are often non-credit bearing and do not count toward degree options) if the student is unable to demonstrate a certain level of proficiency.

It is well documented that high school students who complete a so-called college preparatory curriculum are generally better prepared for college than those who do not (Conley, 2007). But far too many students who do complete a college preparatory curriculum are still found to need remediation courses once they enter college (ACT, 2007 National Data Release). A study conducted by the Ohio Board of Regents in 2002 found that 25 percent of Ohio high school graduates with a known core curriculum required remediation in math or English (Long & Riley, 2007). Even higher percentages of presumably well-prepared California high school graduates have been found to require remediation in math and/or English upon entry at California State University and University of California campuses (Long & Riley, 2007).

College Readiness and the Misalignment of Standards

The problem runs deeper than just poor preparation in high school. The deeper problem has been identified as a misalignment of course material, tests, and standards between high school and college (McCabe, 2001; Venezia, Kirst & Antonio, 2003; Conley, 2007). Aligning curriculum between secondary and postsecondary levels requires a sustained and coordinated effort. Aligning curriculum graduates better prepared students who experience more successful transitions from high school to college and helps to streamline education (Achieve, 2008)

Missouri's alignment process, the Curriculum Alignment Initiative, began in 2007 and is driven by recommendations of the P-20 Council, the Missouri Math, Engineering, Technology, and Science Coalition, and by the legislatively-driven mandates of Senate Bill 389. CAI established competencies for entry- level and exit-level coursework. The goal of the entry-level competencies is to set a clear standard for students, parents, legislators, and educators of what skills students need to be successful in college. The entry competencies set a minimum threshold that students must meet in order to gain access to collegiate-level coursework. Senate Bill 389 further mandates that the competencies be provided to the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education for their review and for them to align their assessments with the competencies. Entry-level competencies have been developed for the following disciplines: Arts and Humanities, Mathematics, Science, Social Science, English and Communication, Foreign Language, and Cross-Disciplinary Skills. Research is clear that cognitive and academic behaviors are beneficial to student preparation, but the "habits of mind" and contextual, and personal behaviors skills and abilities are also crucial for student success (Conley, 2007). Exit-level competencies were also established through CAI, but their primary purpose is aiding in transfer and articulation of single course transfers outside the 42 hour block. Exit competencies will be discussed in more detail in future work outlining policy issues related to transfer and articulation.

LAMP is considered the natural next step after the creation of the competencies. One may well ask how we know whether students exhibit these competencies if they are not measured. One function for LAMP is to "turn the spotlight on assessment" and utilize the competencies as a guide for determining student preparedness for collegiate-level coursework. Questions that arise for consideration include:

- Are their essential entry competencies important to access and college readiness that have yet to be addressed by the Curriculum Alignment Initiative?
- How can we best assess CAI Entry Level Competencies prior to postsecondary entry to alleviate the need for remedial/developmental/pre-collegiate coursework at or after entry?
- What still needs to be done to align CAI Entry Level Competencies with DESE educational assessment standards like Course Level Expectations (CLE)?
- In cases where CLEs are adequately aligned with entry-level competencies, are the End-of-Course examinations (EOC) of the CLEs sufficient to assess for access to postsecondary coursework?
- What kinds of supplemental assessment are required if EOC's are not sufficient and/or for exceptions like late transfer students, out-of-state students, advancement from remediation/developmental coursework to college level etc.?

- How do we ensure that Dual Credit students meet the same expectations as other students?
- How can we best assess the entry-level competencies at postsecondary entry to most effectively address needs for remedial/developmental/pre-collegiate coursework at or after entry?

Early Diagnosis

The use of college placement exams as diagnostic tools in high school is one promising policy that has been pursued in several states. (Tierney & Garcia, 2008). Ten states are administering college and career readiness tests to all high school students as a result of statewide assessment systems (Achieve, 2009)

Clear Standards for Placement

The Missouri Assessment Consortium (MAC), in creating the MAC Handbook, sought to fulfill the need for a reference resource of assessment practices and experiences at public four-year institutions in Missouri. The Handbook also provides definitions of key terms used in assessment that this paper will utilize in providing a basis for research.

Placement and Diagnosis. In the context of assessment for placement into collegiate-level coursework, diagnosis has been defined, according to MAC, as "the meaningful association of a test score with a local education experience. In other words, after careful study the institution has determined that students earning a score below a given point will not be successful in a particular course or pattern of courses without institutional intervention and individual scheduling decisions." Placement into remedial/development/pre-collegiate level coursework occurs when the institution establishes "'cut scores' for placement in enrichment or remedial/developmental sections."

In 1994, the Oklahoma State System for Higher Education adopted several initiatives in their efforts to reduce remediation including: enhancing teacher preparation; increasing standards for college preparation; establishing better communication and feedback to Oklahoma high schools; initiating programs to enhance cooperation between state institutions; and improving Oklahoma college and university graduation rates. In 1994, the Oklahoma State Board of Regents adopted the Student Assessment Policy requiring each institution to develop and implement a comprehensive assessment program with mandatory student placement. Institutions are required to administer a standard comprehensive assessment tool, in this case, the ACT, and to use an ACT score of 19 as their "first-cut" in the areas of English, Math, Science Reasoning, and Reading. Scores below 19 require students to enroll in remedial courses or undergo secondary assessments. Although all institutions use the ACT as the first entry-level assessment, secondary evaluation testing instruments vary according to the institution. Most institutions use ASSET, AccuPlacer, COMPASS, and/or the Nelson-Denney Reading Test, and each institution is responsible for establishing their own cut-scores. These pre-collegiate level courses do not count toward degree requirements and a supplementary per credit hour fee is assessed the student for these courses. Colleges offer orientation courses, computer-assisted instruction, tutoring, and

learning centers, in an effort to increase the rate at which students who take pre-college level courses succeed. Institutions are required to report to the Oklahoma State Regents the methods, instruments, and cut-scores used for entry-level course placement, as well as the student success in both remedial and college-level courses. High school students wishing to concurrently enroll in courses with established ACT cut-scores will not be allowed to enroll in those courses if they score below the minimum standard. A student who scores below the established ACT score in reading is not permitted enrollment in any other collegiate course. Secondary institutional assessments and remediation are not allowed for concurrent high school students.

Results show that since the inception of Oklahoma's assessment policy, the percent of first-time freshmen enrolled in remedial courses has decreased in the state system. From 1996-97 to 2006-2007, the percentage of first-time freshmen enrolled in remedial courses decreased from 40.3% to 36.5%. At research institutions, the percentage dropped from 21.3% to 6.7%, and at regional institutions, the percentage dropped from 34.0% to 33.0%. At community colleges, the percentages remained the same at 49.9%.

Conclusions

The literature points draws a number of conclusions for increasing student success and reducing the number of students who take pre-collegiate level coursework as a result of their being underprepared for college.

- Focus on an essential set of standards that are most important for future success in college. The common expectation should be for all high school students to take a rigorous core curriculum, regardless of plans for college (ACT, 2008; Conley, 2007).
- There must be clear performance expectations of college readiness so that students, parents, and educators receive consistent messages about what it means to be prepared for college (ACT, 2008; Conley, 2007).
- Early monitoring and intervention with middle school students must occur to keep them on target and/or diagnose weak areas that must be addressed (ACT, 2008; Achieve, 2009;Tierney & Garcia, 2008).
- The ability to compare standardized measures across institutions and peer groups can lead to clearer standards and positive outcomes (Dwyer, Miller, & Payne, 2006; OSU, 2008).

LAMP Discussion Themes

The LAMP Advisory Council reconvened as a whole body in May 2009 with a purpose to engage participants in focused discussions on the primary questions, issues, and potential options for policy makers. In a May 7th, 2009 letter to LAMP participants, Commissioner Stein encouraged the Advisory Council to build upon the research conducted by the subcommittees and focus their efforts on policy issues related to promoting greater student preparation and success. Three levels for policy recommendations were identified:

1. Determine where consensus exists among the group and make clear policy recommendations,
2. Determine where further research and examination is warranted and outline a strategy for progress, and
3. Describe issue areas where there remains significant disagreement or lack of clarity and controversy.

Although the meeting participants were able to determine areas where consensus exists among the group, the statements do not rise to the level of policy recommendations. Areas where the group reached consensus were:

1. The Literature focuses on math, reading, writing, and critical thinking skills as the most important for student success in collegiate-level coursework.
2. Postsecondary and secondary collaboration, with routine feedback is imperative for student success.
3. Multiple-assessment model approaches to student measurement are vital.
4. The literature supports early-assessment models for measuring added value in learning.

The group decided that further research was needed in regard to using the Curriculum Alignment Initiative competencies to map student success. CAI worked on developing outcome statements for what students should know, but more research is necessary to determine whether the competencies are aligned with secondary curriculum and current assessment tools.

The next step for the LAMP Advisory Council is to identify potential policy recommendations drawn from the conclusions and to outline a strategy for obtaining information about the competencies, through pilot projects or alignment studies.

Missouri Department of Higher Education

Building Missouri's future…by degrees

May 7, 2009

Colleagues:

First, let me take this opportunity to express my thanks and gratitude for your dedication and good work over these last months. The efforts of LAMP - a voluntary group of educational professionals - have resulted in providing an important foundation about the scope and magnitude of student learning assessment at Missouri's colleges and universities, evidence of promising practices and theoretical frameworks from an extensive literature review, and principles for effective information dissemination for use by policymakers and practitioners. This work is invaluable as we collectively seek to fully implement the MDHE's Curriculum Alignment Initiative (CAI) and the Coordinating Board's public agenda for higher education, *Imperatives for Change*.

As many of you know, the past few months have been tumultuous as the whole country faces dire questions about our future economic prosperity and higher education focuses on how to secure adequate funding during this recession. It is commendable that we continue to move forward on the LAMP initiative even as this storm is raging around us.

Although the dust surrounding funding issues for the immediate future is beginning to settle, elected officials are continuing to place a spotlight on the importance of teaching and learning at Missouri's educational institutions. At local, state and national levels there is a sense of urgency.

LAMP was created to provide policymakers with access to factual information and evidence of best practices that will positively impact policy development surrounding the assessment of student learning. While all transitions along P-20 educational pathways and into the workforce are important, it is essential to prioritize your work. The impressive state-level competency work completed to date will be for naught, unless, assessment policy follows that will impact assessment practices.

Clearly all of the transitions along the P-20 highway – preschool to kindergarten, elementary to middle school, middle to high school, high school to college, lower to upper division work, and undergraduate to graduate education – are important. At the same time it will be more effective to focus on one area at a time. Therefore, I am charging you to prioritize your work by focusing first on the transition from secondary to postsecondary education.

The need to ensure that more of our citizens attend and are successful in completing postsecondary educational programs is greater than ever before in our history. Public policy

about access to and placement in collegiate-level coursework are two areas that have great potential to effect major change in the preparation of students in the P-12 pipeline.

I look forward to receiving an initial report and set of recommendations by June 1, 2009 about public policy surrounding assessment associated with access to and placement in collegiate level coursework. Thank you again for your continued efforts and commitment to this important work.

Sincerely,

Dr. Robert B. Stein, Commissioner

LAMP Meeting
May 11, 2009
Large Group Discussion Themes

CAI Entry-level Competencies and Assessment

CONCLUSION: The literature almost exclusively focuses on math, reading, writing, and critical thinking skills as most important for student success in collegiate-level coursework.

- Should we attend to all CAI competencies or limit to a subset of CAI competencies as listed above as our focus in access and placement?
- Attempts to address all of the entry-level competencies may result in ineffective policy—simply too broad. Need to focus attention. "I'd rather do a few things well than a lot of things poorly."
- The focus on a subset of competencies seems to be leading away from implementation of the identified entry-level competencies.
- Pilot projects can address assessment tools and whether they are aligned with and accurately assess established competencies.
- Look at secondary EOC exams to provide feedback re: alignment.

Collaboration with Secondary Partners

CONCLUSION: Best practices in literature supports collaboration with secondary educators.

- Institutions should collaborate with secondary feeder schools to provide more detailed feedback regarding the success of their students.
- Institutional faculty should establish partnerships with discipline-specific secondary educators to provide specific feedback regarding what students need for college (e.g. English faculty connect with secondary English teachers regarding what constitutes a good paper.
- Collaboration with secondary currently exists through CAI...why not use that process?
- Building Bridges Project—Northwest MO institutions collaborate with feeder schools to share data and look at whole picture of why student is successful or not successful. Using CAI competencies in math, English, and social studies to align curriculum.

Standardized Cut-Scores

CONCLUSION: Benchmarks and standards for demonstrating proficiency could suggest, not one standard, but standards that can be accepted across institutions.

- Oklahoma provides a range of scores, depending on the instrument used, as determined by the institution.
- We can establish scores autonomously by institution rather than an across-the-board establishment of standards (numbers).

Assessment Standards

CONCLUSION: Best practices in literature supports assessing student learning with a portfolio approach.

- Need to utilize a multiple-assessment model approach. Looking at scores alone only provides information in one area. Does not account for poor test-takers, unfocused students, “blow off” students, etc.
- Formative assessments provide best information.

Points of Clarification/Areas of Further Research

- Need to delineate between college success, admission to institutions, and course success.
- CAI worked on outcome statements, but unsure whether competencies map to course success and success for moving on to the next course.
- What are we defining as success?
- Need further research to ensure validity of CAI competencies.