

UNIVERSITY of WISCONSIN
LA CROSSE

November 18, 2008

To: Professor Joe Heim, Chair of Faculty Senate

From: Kathleen Enz Finken, Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

Re: Assessment Coordinator position

With this memo, I formally request the full Faculty Senate's endorsement of a proposed campus Assessment Coordinator position. Attached is a job description and detailed justification for the position. As discussed with the Faculty Senate Executive Committee, this position will be housed in the Center for Advancing Teaching and Learning (CATL), which will open next fall. At that time, Professor Bill Cerbin's current duties will shift to include oversight of the new CATL, as well as teaching responsibilities in the Psychology Department.

The Assessment Coordinator position is a full-time Academic Staff position, the primary responsibilities of which will be to 1) provide ongoing assistance to individuals and departments regarding assessment needs, and 2) carry out and interpret multiple institutional assessment measures. As you are aware, the proposed position has received wide support from the many Faculty Senate committees with whom we have shared this proposal over the last several months. A summary of the actions taken with respect to the proposed CATL and the Assessment Coordinator position is included, below.

- October 15, 2008: The Faculty Budget Review Committee passed a motion in support of the establishment of the Center for Advancing Teaching and Learning, inclusive of the proposed Assessment Coordinator position.
- October 29, 2008: The Faculty Development Committee passed a motion in support of establishing a teaching center at UW-La Crosse.
- November 10, 2008: The General Education Committee passed a motion in support of the proposed Assessment Coordinator position.
- November 11, 2008: The Senate Executive Committee passed a motion in support of the Assessment Coordinator position.

The attached justification outlines the critical need for this position, which must be considered a high priority in this age of accountability. The duties and responsibilities with respect to assessment on college campuses have grown well beyond those manageable by a part-time position. Recent experience demonstrates that, while institutional accountability will remain a growing concern (as demonstrated in the multiple new measures required by the Reauthorization of the Higher Education Act), UW-L's most pressing needs are in the area of programmatic assessment, and the interpretation and use of the collected data. The Assessment Coordinator will serve as a resource to assist the campus community in achieving its goals with respect to assessment.

*Please note that this request is for support of the *position* independent of budget considerations which may influence the timing of an actual search.

Office of the Provost
and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs
145 Graff Main Hall, University of Wisconsin-La Crosse
1725 State Street, La Crosse, WI 54601
Phone: (608)785-8007, Fax: (608)785-8046
An affirmative action/equal opportunity employer

Assessment Coordinator Description

Provides assistance to academic departments and programs, campus committees and groups, and to faculty and staff to plan, implement and use assessment of student learning to improve educational quality. The coordinator will work with various campus groups to update and revise the university's plan to assess student learning in academic programs.

Assessment of student learning outcomes in academic programs is faculty driven. In this aspect of the role, the coordinator will help departments and programs develop solid, realistic and streamlined assessment programs to improve student learning and educational quality. The coordinator may consult directly with departments and instructors in any phase of the assessment process (e.g., identify or develop assessment instruments, identify strategies to implement assessment, analysis of results, ways to use assessment results for improvement purposes).

The assessment coordinator also

- consults with faculty groups and committees (e.g., Academic Program Review, General Education) on assessment
- develops resource materials and provides campus wide workshops and presentations to help faculty and staff streamline and improve their assessment practices
- coordinates and administers university wide assessment activities (e.g., Collegiate Learning Assessment, National Survey of Student Engagement, Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement)
- disseminates and communicates assessment results to internal and external audiences
- develops and promotes strategies to use university assessment results to foster educational improvement
- coordinates, tracks and projects needed actions related to assessment for accreditation from the Higher Education Commission (NCA). Assists departments and programs that need help with their accreditation studies.

Qualifications

1. Master's degree, doctorate preferred.
2. At least three (3) years of assessment experience in higher education.
3. Knowledge of quantitative and qualitative methods and practices to assess student learning in academic programs in higher education, including assessment of general education outcomes.
4. Familiarity with the forms and practices of assessment required for accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission.
5. First hand experience assessing student learning outcomes in an academic program.
6. Ability to work in a consultative role with individual faculty, departments and faculty committees across the disciplines.
7. Ability to communicate effectively about assessment processes and results to multiple audiences.

**Justification for Assessment Coordinator
(a proposed increase from .5 to 1.0 FTE)**

A fulltime assessment coordinator (1.0 FTE) would assist and consult with individual instructors, departments, academic program directors, and campus groups (e.g., General Education Committee, Academic Program Review Committee) and would also be responsible for university wide assessment. The assessment coordinator would work through the Center for Advancing Teaching & Learning to assist individual instructors on classroom level assessment of students and with departments on assessment of student learning in their programs.

Currently, UWL allocates .5 FTE to university wide assessment. Responsibilities focus on administering, analyzing, summarizing, and disseminating results of university wide assessment tests (e.g., National Survey of Student Engagement, Collegiate Learning Assessment, Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency), and responding to external accountability requests (e.g., annual UW System accountability report, NCA).

Attached are documents that relate to the Assessment Coordinator position:

- Extended Position Description (provided by Bill Cerbin)
- NCA Concerns and Recommendations
- Administration and Use of the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) 2007-08
- Using the NSSE at UW-La Crosse 2000-2008

Extended Position Description (provided by Bill Cerbin)

Position descriptions usually list broad responsibilities and often people don't hear about what the work actually involves and where the time goes. Here are a few examples of assessment work.

- Administration of the Collegiate Learning Assessment (**CLA**). We administered the CLA in 2007-08 and will continue to administer it as part of general education assessment, the Voluntary System of Accountability, and UWS annual accountability. Attached is a description (pp. 3-5) on what has been involved so far in administering the test, analyzing, disseminating and using the results.
- Administration of the National Survey of Student Engagement **NSSE**. We have participated in the NSSE in 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2006, 2008 and are now required to do so every other year by UW System. NSSE physically administers the survey. The major work on campus is to analyze, disseminate and promote the use of NSSE results. Attached is a list of strategies used since 2001 to promote the use of NSSE results, p. 6.
- **Consultation** with Academic Departments. In spring 2008 I met with a department interested in updating/upgrading/ revising its assessment of student learning in the major. Prior to the meeting I read their assessment plan and biennial assessment reports and discussed major assessment concerns with the meeting organizer. The meeting included most of the department faculty and lasted 3+ hours. Following the meeting I wrote a follow up summary to the department highlighting what I thought were their best options to improve their assessment.

Departmental consultation is particularly challenging because each unit has its own assessment plan, history, obstacles and goals. The role of the assessment coordinator is to help faculty understand the assessment "requirements", evaluate their current efforts, explore and recommend alternative methods.

- **General Education Assessment Workshop**. I was asked by the General Education Assessment Committee (GEAC) to lead a workshop to help instructors develop and use appropriate assessment tasks and rubrics to measure general education student learning outcomes. This involved developing materials and examples consistent with the GEAC assessment expectations, <http://www.uwlax.edu/gened/Assessment.htm>. About 80 instructors attend the two workshops on August 25 & 29).

What's missing?

Ongoing assistance to departments. Since 1998 there has been minimal assistance and support to academic departments for assessment. A fulltime assessment coordinator would be available to work with departments and programs to improve their assessment practices. A coordinator could

- help design or identify instruments appropriate for assessment of student learning in academic programs
- advise departments about streamlining assessment to make it internally manageable and useful
- help departments develop assessment strategies best suited to their academic program reviews
- help departments prepare for accreditation reviews

Support to faculty on questions of assessment. Classroom assessment is a perennial concern among faculty. An assessment coordinator could be involved in providing workshops and guidance to faculty and faculty groups. For example, assessment is a striking weakness in Faculty Development Grant proposals. Applicants could be referred to the assessment coordinator before submitting proposals.

Work with campus groups to update the university assessment plan and to respond to the NCA assessment recommendations. NCA has identified a wide range of concerns about assessment at UW-La Crosse. An assessment coordinator could be the point person involved in trying to implement NCA recommendations and in improving assessment practices across the institution.

NCA Concerns and Recommendations

The need for more extensive assistance is evident from the concerns about assessment identified by the NCA accreditation team. UWL must report to NCA by January 2009 on how it has implemented the recommendations.

NCA concerns about assessment. The NCA evaluators identified the following concerns:

- While UWL has processes to collect data about student performance at all levels (program, department, university), the processes are not “sufficiently rigorous,” and they do not provide effective mechanisms to use assessment data for systematic improvement.
- Implementation of the assessment processes is variable; the campus culture does not fully embrace “a structure to support assessment activities.”
- Assessment activities are tangentially linked to the APR process, biennial assessment reports are not integrated with the APR process, and departments have not been held accountable for submitting their APR documents.
- Assessment is particularly problematic in general education and graduate programs.

NCA recommendations for changes in UW-L assessment. NCA recommends three broad changes:

- Biennial assessment reports should be integrated into the APR process.
- UW-L should develop and implement a process to assure academic units have solid, realistic assessment plans and that they implement those plans.
- UW-L should develop a plan outlining how to use the excellent data already collected (e.g. NSSE) to make improvements.

Administration and Use of the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) 2007-08

UWL participated in the Collegiate Learning Assessment in 2007-08. This report documents the administration of the test.

Register with the Council for Aid to Education, http://www.cae.org/content/pro_collegiate.htm

Prepare a Testing Plan, http://www.cae.org/content/pdf/Testing_Plan_Template_S08.doc

The plan includes:

1. Institutional ID information
2. Begin and end dates for testing
3. Mean ACT Composite of cohorts
4. University GPA scale
5. Credit hours for graduation
6. Cohort definition and size
7. Sampling approach
8. Recruitment and incentive plan

Schedule GCA classrooms for test sessions.

- Factors to consider—number of test sessions, number of proctors, availability of rooms, room capacity, time of semester
- Scheduled sessions in the evening, 6:30-8:00 p.m. and one session on Friday afternoon, 1:00-2:30.
- Fall 2007 there were 5 test sessions (freshmen). Spring 2008 there were 9 test sessions (seniors). (See test schedule attached.)

Proctor Registration & Training.

- Register proctors with CLA Program Manager.
- Proctors participate in a one-hour web seminar about proctoring the test
- Proctors read the proctor materials
 - Proctor Guide http://www.cae.org/content/pdf/Proctor_Guide_Cross-Sectional_S08.pdf
 - Proctor Checklist, http://www.cae.org/content/pdf/Proctor_Checklist_S08.pdf

Recruit Students

Needed 200 students to complete the test, 100 freshmen in the fall and 100 seniors in the spring. One hundred for each group is the minimum sample size to obtain valid results.

Fall 2007 recruitment of freshmen. Five UWL 100 instructors agreed to have their students (new freshmen) participate in the CLA.

Spring 2008 recruitment of seniors

- Assembled a stratified random sample of students to invite to take the test based on GPA and Major Field of Study. We identified 200 students as the initial sample in early January, 2008.
- Recruitment of students.
 - Draft invitation/request to students to take test
 - Chancellor sent email invitation addressed to individual student (see Chancellor's invitation)
 - Incentive to students is \$25.00 to complete test

- Sent email reminders to non-responders. Sent up to 2 reminders to non-responders. (See email reminders)
- Scheduled students to take test.
 - Created survey for students to select a test session (see attached survey)
 - Sent email confirmation of test session to each student who responds (see confirmation)
 - Responded to student questions and rescheduled students who needed to change their test session. In spring there were about 20-30 students who had to reschedule.
 - Phone call and/or email to students on the day of the test.
- Second sample of seniors. In spring 2008 only 59 seniors completed the test from the initial sample of 200. We drew another sample of 200 and scheduled additional test sessions. Overall 105 seniors completed the test (response rate, 26%).

Proctoring the test

- Schedule test sessions on the CLA website. Each session is assigned a unique number for a specific group of students
- Arrive half hour before test to set up and make sure computer system works
- Circulate student “attendance sheet”
- Explain and collect Informed Consent
- Give directions for taking test (10-15 minutes)
- Oversee students during the test—a common problem is that students get disconnected from the test by hitting certain keys. Proctor must re-connect them to their test session.
- Give payment voucher to students at end of the test
- Filing Irregularity Reports for each test session that documents test irregularities. The reports are sent to CLA.
- Each test session is about 2.5 hours including set up time and time for directions to students

Post-administration Procedures

- Send Irregularity Reports to CLA Program Manager
- Registrar Data Collection. CLA sends data file with names of students who completed the test. For each student we provide ACT score, GPA, Class Standing, Transfer Status.

Coordination of tasks—Bill Cerbin was in charge of conducting the assessment.

- **Assembling sample.** Teri Thill provided Excel file with names and email addresses of students
- **Proctors.** Fall 2007 Bill Cerbin and Carmen Wilson; Spring 2008 Bill Cerbin
- **Request to participate.** Cerbin drafted messages with edits by the Chancellor. Addressed to each student individually and emailed from the Chancellor’s personal email account. Two follow up requests to non-responders also emailed from Chancellor.
- **Phone call reminder.** Work Study student in Provost Office called students on the day of their test.
- **Test Session Confirmations, Scheduling and Rescheduling Students.** Cerbin compiled student test date preferences and emailed each student a confirmation with his/her test session information. Cerbin responded to students who had questions, wanted to reschedule or who emailed the Chancellor about the test.
- **Registrar Data File.** Teri Thill completed the Registrar Data File.

- **Payment of Students.** Cristen Houlihan in Business Services created a payment voucher for seniors taking the test. Chandra Hawkins prepared a voucher for each student. The proctor handed out vouchers to students when they were done with the test. Students were able to redeem the voucher for \$25.00 the following morning after 9:00 a.m. at the Main Hall Cashier window.

Use of CLA Results as of 10-14-08

- Wrote Executive Summary of CLA results, <http://www.uwlax.edu/provost/assessment/assess.htm>
- Created presentation, *What is the CLA?* <http://www.uwlax.edu/provost/assessment/assess.htm>
- Forwarded results to the General Education Committee

Using the NSSE at UW-La Crosse 2000-2008

UW-L has participated in the NSSE seven times since 2000. Our goal is to develop a credible database that can be used by many different campus groups to better understand students' experiences at the university and improve educational quality.

General dissemination of results.

- Distribute two-page summaries of results to all faculty and staff.
- Post summaries on the university assessment website.
- Provide College Deans with customized reports for their respective colleges.
- Discuss the NSSE results at Dean's Council and Provost's Council.
- Discuss results with the Assessment Work Group.
- Present results to the General Education Committee.

Focused use of results.

- Customized Departmental Reports. We provide customized reports to individual academic departments at their request. These break out their majors and compare them as a group to other students in the same college and to all UWL students. Departments that have requested reports: Chemistry, Communication Studies, Psychology, and Sociology/Archaeology
- Customized Reports Programs/Units. We provide customized reports for colleges, programs or other units on campus (e.g., each college receives a report, Academic Advising Center which compared declared and undeclared majors; the Director of General Education; University Centers Staff (BCSSE & NSSE); Equity Score Card; Retention Committee.
- Include NSSE results in the UWS annual accountability report, "Achieving Excellence at UWL" (see <http://www.uwsa.edu/opar/account/index.htm>)
- The UWL Student Learning Project (2001-2003) consisting of 12 faculty and student affairs staff analyzed NSSE results. This group
 - gave a presentation about the NSSE results at the annual UWL Teaching Conference
 - met with the General Education Committee to discuss the results
 - undertook several follow up studies to explore the results in greater depth.
- Incorporated NSSE data extensively in the UWL Self Study for NCA re-accreditation in 2006.
- Campus workshop presentation in spring 2008, *National Measures of Student Engagement: BCSSE and NSSE*

Follow up studies stimulated by NSSE results

- *Freshmen Focus Groups* to explore students' first year experiences.
- *Study of Faculty-Student Interaction*. Surveyed first semester freshmen about their interactions with faculty.
- *First Year Students' Study Skills*. Administered the LASSI (Learning & Study Skills Inventory) to a sample of first year students to determine patterns of academic skills.
- *Peer Tutoring Project*. Established a peer tutoring project in a first year student residence hall.
- *Faculty Survey of Student Engagement*. Participated in the pilot FSSE in 2003 and again in 2004.
- *Longitudinal Analysis of NSSE*. NSSE provided us with a longitudinal analysis comparing results of students who took the NSSE as freshmen in 2000 and then again as seniors in 2003.
- *BCSSE pilot in 2005 and participation in 2007* (e.g., compare responses of first year students who complete the BCSSE at the beginning of the year and the NSSE at the end of the year)