Developing a Comprehensive Outcomes Assessment Program (Coap) Model

For Implementation in Higher Education

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Abstract

In response to the growing need for adopting an organizational perspective in addressing

assessment in higher education, this research attempts to lay the foundation for developing and

implementing a Comprehensive Outcomes Assessment Program (COAP) model based on review of related

literature as well as a survey of higher education institutions. The ideal elements in the model include:

Leadership Commitment, Establishing a Centralized Office, Culture Development,

Partnership with Strategic Planning, Conducting Assessment, Disseminating Results, and

Utilizing Results.

Assessment programs at four-year public institutions in the United States with a minimum

enrollment of 8,000 students were evaluated using the proposed COAP model. Two hundred sixty-one

surveys were distributed, with ninety-four returned. A secondary method of evaluation included the

analyses of institutional web pages, based on the web addresses provided via the survey.

Recommendations are made for an ideal COAP model to be established at colleges and universities

based on the results of the research. The findings of the research indicate that the originally proposed

model derived from the literature be implemented as presented. Although some of the elements were not

actually practiced at the surveyed institutions, responses overwhelmingly indicate that assessment

administrators believe each of these elements are important.

INTRODUCTION

Academic assessment efforts have been underway in higher education for more than two decades in the form

of in-class examinations, grade point averages, and the occasional student survey. But, it shouldn't stop there. Every

aspect of the college and university should be assessed for effectiveness, from academic departments to support areas

to administration.   Many higher education institutions have made attempts to expand assessment efforts, but only

a very few have been successful. Research indicates that the administrations know what is needed, but have no idea of

where to begin. The mind set in most higher education environments has always been "reactive" to the pressures

placed on it. There has, historically, been little proactive planning regarding assessment efforts. In response to the

growing demand for adopting an organizational perspective in addressing assessment in higher education, this

research attempted to find a framework for developing and implementing a Comprehensive Outcomes Assessment

Program (COAP) model based on review of related literature as well as a survey of higher education institutions[i].

WHAT IS OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT?

"Assessment is 'the systematic collection, interpretation, and use of information on student characteristics,

the educational environment, and learning outcomes to improve student learning and satisfaction'" (Gainen &

Locatelli, 1995, as cited in Hindi & Miller, 2000, p. 286). Miller (1999, p. 96) also cites "the standard dictionary

definitions of the verb 'to assess' are 'to set or determine the amount', and 'to evaluate or appraise.'" Assessment

activities undertaken at universities, therefore, have the potential to provide a broad range of data and information

that will serve multiple purposes. Muffo (1992, p. 772) cites improved student performance and program

effectiveness as the most frequently reported goals of assessment. Similarly, Ory & Parker (1989, p. 379) report that

"approximately 80 percent of the universities reporting assessment activities conduct them 'to improve teaching/

learning' and 'to demonstrate institutional effectiveness/ accountability.'" If the ultimate purpose of assessment

at a university were taken into consideration, a pattern begins to emerge. Assessment in its broadest sense involves

both formative and summative evaluation.

> Formative evaluation is undertaken for the purpose of improving and developing an
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> activity,
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> program, person, or product. Summative evaluation is undertaken for the purposes of
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> accountability
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> or resource allocation (in the case of programs), for certification, selection, and
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> placement (in the
>
> case of students), or for decisions about merit increases or promotions (in the case of
>
> faculty) (Davis,
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> 1989, p. 8-9).

> Outcomes assessment, then, "focuses on the *outcomes* [italics added] of the educational process, rather than

on the inputs or on the learning environment" (Baker et al., 1994, p. 105). Baker (1994, p. 107) also posits that

outcomes assessment begins with developing a mission statement, goals and objectives for the

university. "The

objectives should be capable of being operationalized, that is, the fulfillment, or lack thereof, of accomplishing the

objectives can be measured by outcomes." Karmon & McGilsky (1997, p. 133) agree that

> Accountability requires standards of performance, a means to achieve and maintain
>
> those standards, and a way of measuring program outputs. A program's mission and
>
> goals are its standards. The educational activities both inside and outside the
>
> classroom are the processes used to achieve the program's mission and goals.
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> Assessment activities gather data on the output from the program for use in evaluating
>
> the extent to which the program's mission and goals are being met.

These data should be used to develop "indicators of effectiveness." Baker et al. (1994, p. 108) states that "outcomes

assessment can provide information on the actuality of the fulfillment of the program's objectives, as opposed to

working only on the intentions. Thus, outcomes assessment is a feedback loop which can be used to make changes in

both the inputs and the processes." As a result, outcomes assessment is never static, it is constantly changing and

moving as institutions advance towards achieving their missions and goals. As in any type of assessment program

undertaken, there are two ultimate "purposes for instituting outcomes assessment: 1) to improve student learning

and performance, and 2) to improve programs, program planning, and program development" (Underwood, 1991, p.

60).

Without any type of formal assessment process in place, Terenzini (1989, p. 645) posits that "the 'best'

colleges and universities are frequently thought to be those with high-ability and high-achieving students, more books

in their library, more faculty with terminal degrees, lower student-faculty ratios, larger endowments and so on."

Kimmell et al. (1998) agree, "there are three basic approaches to assessment: it can be based on reputation,

resources, or outcomes."[ii] With the *reputation* approach, a university "collects and disseminates the opinions of [its]

users and peers. It is generally based on national surveys of college and university administrators, employers and

alumni." The *resources* approach focuses on such things as the ACT scores of entering freshmen, the size of the

institution's endowment, the physical plant, the number of volumes in the library, and the immensity of faculty

salaries. The *outcomes* approach, on the other hand, is centered exclusively on outcome measures such as GRE

scores of new graduate students, the percent of graduating seniors pursuing graduate education, and average salary of

graduating seniors which will, to some degree, create a cross between the *reputational* and *resource* approaches to

assessment (Kimmell et.al., 1998, p. 856-857).

Focusing strictly on resources and/or reputation for assessing education does not provide a clear picture of

student learning or program effectiveness to stakeholders, including state policy makers. Spangehl (1987, p. 36)

provides a perfect example:

Imagine a factory run this way demanding that its effectiveness and quality be judged,

not by the products it produces, but by the salaries and qualifications of its employees,

its physical resources, and like factors that might influence the quality of its products.

Then imagine the factory manager asking for an increase in the factory's budget—not

because production or quality has increased, but because other, similarly run factories

are asking for increases.[iii]

It would not be likely, in this case, that the factory manager would receive additional funds. The same philosophy

should apply in the higher education environment, yet in the past, this is how universities have responded to

assessment requirements. But, as is the case with most initiatives, assessment efforts are evolving and growing.

ASSESSMENT TODAY

Over the last twenty years, there has been little advancement in assessment efforts in higher education, with

the exception of a few institutions. Only recently have universities begun to seriously review their assessment

practices. Many are now beginning to adopt the concept of outcomes assessment. Rogers & Gentemann (1989, p.

346) credit the Commission on Colleges for the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) as "a major

driving force in the assessment of educational outcomes." This agency was one of the first regional associations to

adopt and require "institutional effectiveness" criteria in order "to emphasize the results of education and to focus on

the extent to which the institution uses assessment information to reevaluate goals, to make essential improvements,

and to plan for the future" (SACS, 1987, p. iii). According to Gaither (1996, p. 7) SACS "now requires as a

condition for accreditation that each institution have a strategic plan and an internally developed assessment program

to measure progress toward the performance goals in the plan." Similarly, the State of Texas now mandates[iv] public

institutions to have a strategic plan in place, as well as assessment of the plan's strategies. For the most

part,

universities have traditionally treated strategic planning initiatives separately from assessment initiatives.

The problem lies in that there is no clear understanding of how to institutionalize assessment. "Despite

increasing nationwide attention to the topic of assessment, there is no clear consensus on exactly what topics and

processes assessment comprises" (Davis, 1989, p. 7). Sell (1989a, p. 22) reports:

Most colleges and universities are already doing extensive work in assessment if we

define the term assessment as a process for informing decisions and judgments through

(1) framing questions; (2) designing or selecting instruments and procedures for

collecting data; (3) collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data; and (4) reporting and

using information that is derived from qualitative as well as quantitative data.

These processes are key to assessment, but there should be more consideration involved in the "who, what, when,

where, and why".

Ory (1992, p. 467) posits that "the initial focus of the current assessment movement was measuring student

outcomes for the purpose of student development...Today's campus assessment activities focus on students as well as

faculty, programs, and the institution as a whole." Ewell (1987, p. 23) concurs that the character of assessment is

shifting. "While the term still means many things to many people, the symbolism of assessment increasingly has

moved from instructional improvement to institutional accountability."

So, where do we go from here? Altschuld & Kumar (1995, p. 5) stress the need for a more systematic

approach or model for assessing institutional outcomes as education moves in a new direction. But, no such template

exists that can be applied or adopted by all institutions[v]. There are no standard methods for managing higher

education. In response to the growing need for adopting an organizational perspective in addressing assessment, this

research attempted to find a framework for developing and implementing a Comprehensive Outcomes Assessment

Program (COAP) model that is adaptable to most colleges and universities. The COAP model developed is based on

review of related literature as well as a survey of higher education institutions.

ASSESSMENT MODEL

There is vast literature available on assessment and there are a few characteristics of effective assessment

practices emphasized repeatedly.   Six primary elements were addressed and discussed independently throughout the

literature.   A seventh element, although only vaguely addressed in the literature, is key to implementing an

assessment program and therefore is incorporated into the model. The ideal elements in a proposed model[vi] for

developing and implementing a Comprehensive Outcomes Assessment Program (COAP) at the college or university

level include:

- **Leadership Commitment**

- **Establishing a Centralized Office**

- **Culture Development**

- **Partnership with Strategic Planning Efforts**

- **Conducting Assessment**

- **Disseminating Results**

- **Utilizing the Results**

A detailed discussion of each of these elements is included in the remainder of this paper. (Appendix A provides a

direct linkage of the elements to the literature reviewed.)

<u>**Leadership Commitment**</u>

Before any type of comprehensive outcome assessment program can be implemented, there must be support

for and a firm commitment to the program by the university administration. This commitment includes visible

support and involvement in the process by top administrators (i.e., president, vice presidents, deans, and chairs) as

well as the willingness to provide the necessary resources needed for implementation. Because most university

environments are autonomous and decentralized, it is critical that faculty, staff, and students see the belief in and

commitment of administration while implementing a university-wide assessment program.   According to Terenzini

(1989), this commitment and support by all areas of leadership within the university needs to be continuous and

vigorous. He posits that the commitment does not end once the assessment program has been implemented.

Leadership commitment should be seen even after assessment results have been disseminated and the data is used for

improvement of processes. Assessment is a continuous cyclical activity. "The temptation for leaders to delegate the

assessment processes to others can quickly make assessment just one more report to read" (Magruder et al., 1997, p.

26).

The leadership commitment needed for successful assessment efforts requires more than just visible

support, it also requires the continuous allocation of resources to support these efforts. Assessment is an activity

with real costs. University leaders must provide reasonable resources, both financial and material, to support these

activities. Resources needed to develop and maintain a successful assessment program can include financial support

for purchase and development of the instruments, coordinating and maintaining activities, tabulating and analyzing

the results, and training and education in the form of travel and registration fees for conferences and workshops on

assessment. "Some resources must be earmarked for improvement efforts so that plans based on assessment findings

can actually be implemented rather than put off to a future year" (Banta, 1997, p. 90).

<u>Establishing a Centralized Office</u>

Whether a university establishes a new office or reorganizes an existing office, university-wide assessment

efforts must be coordinated. The many activities that occur simultaneously throughout the institution need to be

controlled and organized. According to Palomba (1997, p. 43) establishing a central assessment office allows for an

administrative structure that has continuity and that can focus exclusively on assessment issues. The staff of the office

offer an available resource for assessment efforts throughout the university.

Some of the primary functions of this centralized office could include: preparing an inventory of existing

assessment activities; developing, administering, and analyzing activities; providing training and education; and

consulting on assessment activities conducted at the discipline level.

<u>Inventory of Existing Activities</u>. Once it is determined that a comprehensive outcomes assessment

program will be

implemented, it is pertinent that information be collected on assessment activities that are already occurring within

the institution. Assessment experts[vii] agree that determining what's out there is the first step in the assessment

process. As Ory (1992, p. 471) states, "Often the necessary data for an assessment activity already exist on a

campus but in a variety of places. Assessment staff can better respond to the information needs of their audiences by

being knowledgeable of all campus offices and the type of information collected and maintained by each." This step is

often accomplished via a survey of all academic and non-academic administrators.[viii]

Once an inventory is developed, activities should be coordinated by the centralized office to avoid

duplication of efforts. A calendar must be established to reduce the number of assessment surveys occurring

simultaneously. A coordinated calendar of activities should stabilize the response rates. Details of the inventory

should be distributed to appropriate personnel across the campus for informational purposes. If pertinent

administrators are aware of existing activities that are occurring and the potential audiences for these activities, they

may be in a better position to collaborate with other offices.

<u>Developing, Administering, and Analyzing Activities</u>. Depending on the type of office established within the

institution, responsibilities could include actually developing, administering, and analyzing university-wide

assessment activities. For example, at The Ohio State University, assessment activities are coordinated through the

Office of Institutional Research, which played a pivotal role in implementing a university-wide process (Banta, 1997,

p. 85). Gray and Diamond (1989, p. 91) discuss the activities of Syracuse University's Center for Instructional

Development. As a support unit to the university, the Center is responsible for designing and conducting studies at

the request of many different academic units and administrative offices. It is their belief that

A centralized office that conducts studies relative to all areas can be extremely

valuable in helping to avoid duplication of effort by coordinating study

implementation and fostering the integration of study findings. Having a centralized

office is also cost-effective since it permits specialized talents to be used campus-wide,

thus reducing the need to add evaluation and research specialists to many different

campus units.

Consulting on Assessment Activities. Even though it would be ideal for all assessment activities to be coordinated

university-wide, there are some instances where assessment will occur at the department level, as with discipline-

specific studies. The established centralized office could serve in the capacity of consultant and advisor to academic

departments that conduct discipline-specific assessment activities within their colleges for accreditation purposes.

Ewell (1988) posits that administrative staff within the established centralized office should include trained experts in

the field of assessment. Thus, they would be available to assist in the development of survey instruments or provide

training and education to faculty and staff involved in assessment.

Culture Development

One of the most important elements in a comprehensive outcomes assessment program is the establishment

of a culture that embraces assessment throughout the campus. Administrators and leaders need to lay the foundation

for undertaking such an expansive effort. Methods of establishing culture include integrating assessment into the

university's mission and values, creating an atmosphere of open communication and positive perceptions,

encouraging everyone's involvement in the process, and establishing university-wide policies and procedures for

assessment activities. Banta and Kuh (1998) concur and suggest that if the university values assessment and rewards

assessment activities, more collaboration will occur. Encouraging professional development, recognition and

rewards, model development as a group, etc. produces more collaboration, trust, personal rapport and a sense of

ownership of the process.

<u>Open Communication and Perceptions</u>. All of the authors[ix] agree that creating an atmosphere of open

communication and collaboration among all university constituents — from the president, through to the faculty, to

the students — is essential if the culture for a comprehensive assessment program is to be established. Altschuld &

Witkin (2000, p. 239) suggest that, "stress must be placed on communicating with staff, seeking their input,

and developing the sense of meaning that the process and its results are ultimately important to them." Negative

perceptions are curtailed if people are able to openly question and discuss assessment and its outcomes.

> Assessment yields information that has power and influence in any organization. It is
>
> particularly important that faculty view assessment as a tool for their own personal
>
> growth more than as a necessary and evil chore that allows the institution to judge
>
> them (Braskamp, 1989, p. 45).

<u>Involvement in the Process</u>. Another important component of establishing a culture supportive of

assessment is the

inclusion of all stakeholders in the process. The purpose of a comprehensive outcomes assessment program is to

gather and share data in all areas of the university community in order to improve processes and create excellence

throughout. This endeavor can only succeed if every member of the campus — faculty, staff, students,

administrators — is willing to become involved in the process. As more people across the campus become involved

in planning and assessment, they will begin to recognize the benefits for the university of collaborating and working

together (Banta & Kuh, 1998, p. 44). "When a person plays a role in establishing goals for the tasks to be performed

and the standards of acceptable performance, investment in accomplishing the tasks increase" (Braskamp, 1989, p.

46).

All of the authors of the literature[x] agree that faculty is the most crucial group to get involved. Banta and

Pike (1989) maintain that a successful assessment program should involve faculty from the beginning in determining

the purpose of assessment, the parameters to be assessed, what tools to use, and how the findings will be used.

"Faculty members play the single most important role in assessment. Successful assessment programs create an

atmosphere in which faculty not only learn about but take ownership of institutional assessment efforts" (Banta et.

al., 1996, p. 36). Banta (1997) posits that the lack of faculty support is the most significant barrier to successful

implementation of outcomes assessment.

Not only is faculty involvement important, but also student support. After all, students are the reason

universities exist. They are the people that are served. Universities should learn from students as well as teach

them.

One unique aspect of the university's [Truman State] assessment program is that every

student participates in assessment...If only a sample of students were used, a message

would be suggested that assessment is strictly for university and accountability

purposes and is not directly relevant to students...It has been the institution's

experience that sustaining a student-centered focus in the assessment program has

been a critical element in continuing student support and participation in the process

(Magruder et.al., 1997, p. 21).

Not all institutions can involve every single student in their assessment activities. Nevertheless, every effort and

every avenue should be utilized to gather the perceptions of as many students as possible.

Setting Policies and Procedures. Brown (1989) suggests that as the institutional assessment process is established, it

is useful to develop specialized instruments or identify standard instruments that are used routinely in every review.

This would contribute to the consistency of the evaluations across departments. University policy areas addressed

include procedures for beginning an assessment activity, appropriate avenues for data collection and dissemination,

the role and responsibilities of the centralized office, public access to information obtained through assessment

activities, etc. It should never be assumed that all assessment practitioners will automatically know what the

university's policies are unless they are clearly stated and widely distributed.

Training and Education. Before any assessment activities take place, the university community needs to be well-

informed and educated about what assessment means. A culture cannot be established and integrated into the

university environment without educating every person about the program. Internal workshops and training sessions

should be developed to introduce the concept to the community. Student orientations should address the program

and its expectations to the students. Resources should be provided to allow faculty and staff to attend external

classes and conferences on assessment. Professional journals and publications should be purchased and provided for

everyone involved in the process. The more educated and informed that employees are, the more willing they will

be to embrace the assessment driven changes.

Partnership with Strategic Planning Efforts

Hand in hand with culture development is establishing a partnership with existing strategic planning efforts.

Although much of the literature[xi] briefly mentions developing assessment plans based on university missions and

goals, there is no real discussion about tying assessment efforts directly to university, college, and department

specific strategic plans where the goals and measures are established. It is imperative, however, that administrators

and assessment practitioners throughout the university consider their desired direction and desired outcomes before

developing assessment efforts to track and assess their progress towards achieving these outcomes. Linking

assessment activities to the university's mission and value statements, goals, objectives, strategies, and intended

outcomes will assist in planning for the use of results of assessment outcomes, as well as guide the institution in it's

desired future direction. By partnering strategic planning and assessment efforts, universities can take advantage of

an established and complementary process.

There is much activity that is duplicated for strategic plan development and assessment plan development.

Both involve developing a mission and/or vision statement, creating goals and objectives, determining intended

outcomes, identifying methods to assess whether the goals and objectives are being accomplished, implementing the

plan, and utilizing the results for program improvement. Both are developed at all levels of the institution, from the

university level to the division, college, department and program levels. Both involve conducting an inventory

before beginning. Both encourage active involvement of all members of the institution throughout the process.

<u>Mission and Values</u>. The first step in laying the foundation is to integrate assessment into the university's mission and

core values. When Ball State University implemented its university-wide assessment program, the mission statement

was immediately amended to call for "constant and vigorous self-assessment" (Palomba, 1997, p. 31). This, alone,

will not immediately change the mind set within the institution. There must be a solid commitment throughout the

institution (top to bottom). "Assessment cannot and should not take place in the absence of a clear sense as to what

matters most at the institution. In order for assessment to lead to improvements, it must reflect what people are

passionate about, committed to, and value" (Banta et. al., 1996, p. 5). By laying this preliminary foundation, the

institution's culture and its members can embrace the solid commitment to planning and assessment. When strategic

planning and assessment are woven into the actual mission and values of the university, a solid commitment is

established to ensure these initiatives are embraced by the university community.

Goals, Objectives, Strategies, and Intended Outcomes. Karmon and McGilsky (1997, p. 134) maintain that there

are five key elements of strategic planning. The elements include:

> (1) a clearly stated mission and accompanying goals; (2) processes to implement the
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> mission and goals; (3) assessment of the outcomes of the program; (4) evaluation of the
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> assessment data; and (5) actions to maintain effective elements of the program and
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> improve ineffective elements.

These five elements are reflective of what is involved in assessment activities suggested within the literature.

Institutions must tie assessment to their mission and value statements. Assessment efforts must reflect the goals of

the institution. Assessment involves evaluating program outcomes and disseminating the data gathered. Activities

require the utilization of assessment results to improve programs. There is an obvious connection between strategic

planning and assessment. It only makes sense, then, that these two initiatives be partnered to occur simultaneously

and collaboratively.

Once the culture is developed and the mission is in place, university strategic goals are developed. In an

effort to integrate planning and assessment activities at the institutional level, one major strategic goal should address

self-assessment. By clearly specifying assessment as a goal, all other areas, both academic and administrative support,

are able to develop specific assessment strategies within their plans that are directly linked to the university's strategic

plan. Academic department strategic plans can include strategies that specifically address desired student learning

outcomes. Administrative support departments can include strategies that address desired customer service

outcomes. Each of these developed assessment strategies must include: intended outcomes, assessment methods,

time lines, costs involved, funding sources, person(s) responsible, stakeholders, and actual assessment results as

progress is made. As this occurs, an assessment plan is also, in essence, developed.

By integrating assessment activities and strategic planning activities into one formal plan[xii], there is less

duplication of paperwork and time is saved. Assessment, as strategic planning, will become embedded into the

organization's culture and will become a day-to-day way of life for all members of the organization.

<u>Conducting Assessment</u>

Assessment activities at most colleges and universities generally fall into three broad categories: university-

wide, general education, and discipline-specific (Palomba, 1997, p. 33). Generally, university-wide activities are

conducted through a centralized office. General education activities can either be conducted by the centralized office

or by a specific college. Discipline-specific activities are usually conducted by faculty within the college or academic

department. Regardless of where these activities actually occur, methods of assessment used must be considered and

assessment plans need to be developed prior to undertaking the activity.

<u>Assessment Methods</u>. There are a number of methods for gathering data about students for assessment purposes.

These can include: standardized tests, home-grown tests, senior assignments, student surveys, capstone courses,

graduate/employer surveys, professional portfolios, entrance/exit interviews, focus groups, comprehensive oral

exams, student advisory councils, fieldwork evaluations, and licensing/certification test scores, to name a few.

Practitioners in the field of assessment need to be aware of these methods, understand when each applies, and

research the benefits of each.[xiii]

When considering the type of assessment method to use for a particular study, practitioners need to remain

focused on the type of outcomes information they are interested in gathering. Different methods can produce

different outcomes. Some are more credible and valid than others. The majority of the experts agree that using

multiple methods to collect data increases the reliability and validity of the data. Multiple methods that reveal

consistent results enable greater confidence in the results.[xiv]

<u>Developing Assessment Plans</u>. All departments responsible for conducting assessment activities should develop

assessment plans for each of the projects conducted. Like any good applied research effort, universities must take

into account norms of empirical research prior to engaging in assessment activities. Also, once the activity is

implemented, documenting the entire process aids in future assessments.

<u>Disseminating Results</u>

Once assessment activities are completed and results are analyzed, they should be distributed to appropriate

audiences for use in improvements. Banta (1997, p. 88) argues that in communicating the results of assessment

efforts,

comprehensive reports are needed for campus wide decision makers, whereas short

summaries are appropriate for small groups with a particular, well-defined interest.

Comparative data from other institutions or from the same institution at previous

points in time should be included.

At Ball State University,

In order to provide an overview of assessment projects, a summary report of

assessment findings from several projects is updated annually. These reports contain a

brief description of each project along with important project findings. They are sent

to senior administrators, deans, and department chairs. Department chairs circulate

the reports to their faculty (Palomba, 1997, p. 39).

Authors of assessment studies should take into account that assessment results are viewed and used differently by

different audiences. Even though a discipline-specific activity is conducted by one college, the results might prove

useful for another department within the university.

With the continuing advances in web technology, opportunities for disseminating assessment results are

greatly enhanced. Query systems of existing databases can be developed for sharing and individualizing data to serve

specific needs.

Utilizing Results

The assessment process is not complete after the results are distributed. In fact, this could be considered the

starting point of the process (Dennison & Banda, 1989, p. 53). Data actually needs to be used for improvement.

This is the step in the process where other models often fail. If the atmosphere and culture is not properly

established within the university environment, results are likely buried for fear of repercussions from negative

outcomes and all assessment efforts would have occurred for naught. At Truman State University,

One of the most salient factors for the successful implementation of the university's

assessment culture was the actual integration of the results of the assessment program

into the management and operation of the institution. Unless faculty and students can

see evidence that the results of their assessment efforts actually make a substantive

difference in their work, it is very difficult to move beyond a potentially cynical

compliance mode of operation (Magruder et. al., 1997, p. 22).

As Braskamp (1989, p. 49) so eloquently states, "Just as diagnosis without treatment is not very helpful to a sick

patient, assessment without analysis and action can do little for an institution." For example, many accrediting

boards require documentation that programs conduct assessment activities and use data information for the purpose

of program changes and improvements. Assessment results should be used in external activities such as program

reviews, accreditation processes, fund-raising, and legislative reporting. Internally, the data can be used in the

planning and budgeting processes, for presentations, academic program development, and student and faculty

recruiting, to name a few. In order for a comprehensive outcomes assessment program to succeed, the cycle must go

full circle and the outcomes must be used for improvement.

These seven elements, as a whole, comprise the ideal model for developing a comprehensive outcomes

assessment program at any institution. It should be noted that elements of the proposed model are not exclusive or

exhaustive of each other. There is considerable overlap and they can and should occur simultaneously.

METHODOLOGY

Survey research was the primary method of collecting data on Comprehensive Outcomes Assessment

Program elements. In order to increase validity and reliability of results, content analysis of websites was selected as

a secondary method of collecting data. The population of this research includes four-year public institutions in the

United States with a minimum student enrollment of 8,000 (n=261). This population was selected in order to gain a

broad view of what is happening at four-year public institutions. Ninety-four survey responses were returned of the

261 distributed, for a response rate of 36%. A total of forty-five (17%) web addresses were provided.

The preliminary framework was transformed into a questionnaire which was mailed to presidents/

chancellors at these four-year public institutions in order to determine if the elements in the model made sense to

assessment practitioners.   The questionnaire consisted of fourteen two-part questions. The first part of each

question asked if the institution used or practiced the element of the COAP model, while the second part of each

question asked the respondent to rate the importance of the element in assessment practices. A five-point Likert

scale was used for the ratings, where "1" indicated "Not at all important," "2" denoted "Of little importance," "3"

signified "Don't Know," "4" expressed "Somewhat important," and "5" indicated "Very Important." The survey was

operationalized using the COAP model.   Appendix B shows the explicit links between the questionnaire, the

webpage review, and the model.

Because multiple measurement is desirable to counterbalance weaknesses of one method with the strengths

of another, content analysis was used as a secondary method of data gathering. Websites identified through the

survey instruments were reviewed and compared to written survey responses for additional information and

clarification using a coding sheet developed from the conceptual framework. The web analyses provided support

for the first of the paired questions in the survey instrument (about the criteria of the elements).

Statistical results collected include simple descriptive statistics including means and percentages. Qualitative

data such as comments (both negative and positive) were also collected and reviewed.

RESULTS

The overall results of the study overwhelmingly give evidence that after more than twenty years of activity,

there is still an avid interest in assessment in higher education. This is evidenced by the fact that over 70 percent of

the survey respondents asked to receive a copy of the survey results. Cumulative findings indicate (with high levels

of agreement) that every identified element and sub-element within the proposed COAP model was found to be of

importance to the responding institutions. In fact, the modal response was 5 or "very important" in twelve of the

thirteen elements and sub-elements presented, with the remaining response of 4 or "somewhat important". When

asked about the importance of having a comprehensive outcomes assessment program at their institution, 68 of 91

respondents rated it as "very important". The mean rating for this was 4.7 on a scale of 1 to 5 (see Appendix C).

Leadership Commitment

In evaluating the first element of the proposed COAP model, *Leadership Commitment*, the questionnaire

asked if top leaders provided support for assessment activities in the form of direct involvement and allocating

resources. Ninety-one percent of respondents believe that leadership support is in place at their institutions (see

Appendix D). Comments received indicate that support is mainly in the form of resources, rather than direct

involvement. When asked about the level of importance of leadership support, seventy-seven of 90 respondents

rated it as "Very important", the mean response rate of 4.8.

Establishing a Centralized Office

The second element within the proposed COAP model involves *Establishing a Centralized Office* to

coordinate assessment activities across the institution. Sixty-one percent of the respondents have some type of

centralized office in place at their institutions. Results also indicate that 80% of respondents have conducted some

type of inventory of existing assessment activities across their university. Comments received suggest that most

universities have only one person that coordinates assessment activities or that responsibilities are shared between a

council and various existing offices, such as Institutional Research and Academic Affairs. Comments also indicate

that although assessment activities are tracked informally, no "official" collection of activities have been conducted.

Some reported that they are "planning to" conduct an inventory. The administrators' responses regarding the

importance of having a centralized office in place indicate that 69 of 88 respondents (78%) feel that it is important,

while 17 didn't know if it was or not, for an overall mean of 4.2. Eighty-three percent of respondents felt it is

important to have an inventory of assessment activities, with a mean response rate of 4.2, as well. Again, the

majority of the respondents found this element of the COAP model to be very important. In reviewing relevant

websites, 42% discussed a centralized office available for assistance with assessment activities. Items addressed in the

website that are available through this office include: developing assessment activities (38%); administering

assessment activities (36%); analyzing assessment activities (27%); and consulting on assessment activities (40%).

Only 27% of websites addressed having a formal inventory of all assessment activities conducted throughout their

university. A reason for the discrepancies between the survey results and the web analyses could be because web

pages are vague and do not provide great detail about specific activities.[xv]

Culture Development

      Element three in the proposed comprehensive outcomes assessment program model involves *Culture*

Development. Areas such as open communication with employees, positive perceptions about assessment activities,

employee involvement, established policies/procedures or guidelines, and training/education opportunities are

relevant in developing the appropriate culture for introducing assessment at the university level. Sixty-eight percent

of respondents indicated that they have established assessment policies and that they provide assessment training and

education to employees. Seventy-three percent indicated that all employees at their institution have the opportunity

to become involved in assessment activities. When asked about open communication/positive perceptions, only

67% felt that their institutions practiced this. Comments received suggest that universities have open communication

about assessment activities, but there are still not positive perceptions about it. It is also indicated that mostly faculty

are involved in assessment efforts, with little staff included. Respondents do not feel that enough training and

education is provided, and when it is provided it occurs sporadically and is limited. Results of the questions

regarding the importance of these areas in culture development indicate that respondents felt that all were important.

Communication/perceptions rated 4.8, employee involvement rated 4.0, having established policies/procedures or

guidelines rated 4.4, and offering training rated 4.5.   In reviewing websites, seventy-one percent of the sites

reviewed demonstrate the open discussion of activities, while only 42% discussed training and education. There

were only 47% that had policies and procedures included and 27% that addressed employee involvement.[xvi]

Partnership with Strategic Planning Efforts

The fourth element, *Partnering Assessment with Strategic Planning*, was addressed in the questionnaire with

two questions. The first asked if institution's mission and/or value statements specifically addressed assessment

activities, while the second asked if their assessment practices were directly linked to university planning processes.

Seventy-four percent indicated that these two processes were linked. On the other hand, only 39% of respondents

indicated that assessment was addressed in their institution's mission and/or value statements. Comments received

suggest that there is some linkage to planning, but there is no formal or direct relationship between the two

activities. In other words, assessment results are used to guide program activities that occur, but strategic planning

does not affect the types of assessment activities conducted. When discussing mission and/or value statements,

comments received suggest that assessment is implied, but not directly stated. In reviewing web pages, only 13%

demonstrated direct verbiage in their institution's mission and/or value statements regarding assessment. The

percentages regarding linkage to strategic planning were pretty evenly distributed.   Fifty-one percent

of sites

addressed ties to strategic planning, while 49% did not. Eighty-one of 86 respondents believed that it is important to

link assessment activities to their strategic planning process, for an overall mean of 4.7. On the other hand, only

sixty-one of 88 felt it was important to address assessment in their institution's mission and/or value statements

(mean =3.9).

<u>Conducting Assessment</u>

Element five in the proposed comprehensive outcomes assessment program model involved actually

Conducting Assessment activities. Respondents were questioned about individual assessment plans in place for all

departments across campus, both academic and administrative. It is interesting to note that only 44% of respondents

claim to have individual assessment plans in place for all areas of the university. Comments received indicate that all

academic departments have plans, but few administrative departments do. This is consistent with the literature

review, which suggests that historically, only academics are involved in assessment activities because they focus

primarily on student learning, and little on program effectiveness. There were also comments indicating that this is

being "worked on", but "not yet" and that some had plans in place but they were "inactive" or not current. The

review of institutional web pages involved identifying the discussion of assessment plan criteria, as well as

information about assessment methods. Overall, 62% of the sites discussed assessment methods, while 69%

provided guidelines for developing assessment plans. Eighty-one of the 87 respondents indicated that it is important

to have individual assessment plans in place for each department (mean= 4.6). Five respondents indicated that they

didn't know if this was important, while only one felt it was of little importance.

<u>Disseminating Results</u>

Disseminating Results, the sixth of seven elements in the COAP model, was addressed in the survey

instrument with a question specifically asking if results are disseminated throughout the institution. Surprisingly,

only sixty-five percent indicated that assessment results were disseminated. The comments identified the web as the

primary source for disseminating information on assessment results, while others stated that results are distributed

"from the vice presidents, to the deans, to the chairs" of departments. Fifty-three percent of the websites reviewed

included established procedures for disseminating assessment results. Results of the ratings of the importance of

disseminating assessment results throughout the university indicate that 67 of 87 respondents felt it is important to

disseminate the data (mean= 4.2). Surprisingly, five respondents did not feel that this element was important and

fifteen did not know if it was important or not.

<u>Utilizing Results</u>

The final element in the COAP model, *Utilizing Results*, was addressed in the questionnaire by asking if

assessment results are utilized for program improvement or modification at their institution. Ninety-five percent of

the respondents believed that assessment results are utilized at their institution. Some comments indicated that

departments are "asked or directed to use the results" or that they "hoped so". Eighty-six of the 88 respondents

indicated that actually utilizing assessment results is important to an institution (mean =4.7).

A comprehensive view of all research results can be found in Appendices C through F. Appendix C

presents the cumulative ratings of importance of the individual elements within the model, as indicated by the

respondents. Appendix D shows overall responses to questions regarding institutional assessment practices, while

Appendix E presents results of whether these practices are addressed on university web pages. Appendix F presents

the combined results of the survey responses.

CONCLUSION

Overall survey results indicate that all of the elements in the proposed Comprehensive Outcomes

Assessment Program (COAP) model are practiced to some extent at 4-year public universities. *Leadership Support*

and *Utilizing Results* occurred most often in practice (over 90%). Most of the remaining elements were employed

less often (at least 65%) in practice. The two major exceptions included "individual assessment plans" (44%) and

"addressing of assessment in mission/values statements" (39%). It is believed that the reason for the low percentage

of respondents answering yes to the question is because institutions have historically implemented assessment

activities solely in academic areas, with little or no activity on the administrative side. The comments received did

suggest that institutions are working to remedy or modify current practices. Regarding the specific addressing of

assessment in mission and/or values statements, it is possible the importance of this had not been considered

previously.

Based on the overall results of the questionnaire, as well as the websites reviewed[xvii], it is recommended that

colleges and universities begin implementing the concept of a university-wide or comprehensive outcomes

assessment program by utilizing the original COAP model developed initially from the literature and supported

through the responses of 94 other institutions. In particular, a direct linkage of assessment practices to strategic

planning initiatives, from the very beginning, is key to the overall success of the program. If assessment is addressed

when developing goals, objectives and strategies for a department's plan, there would be no need for a separate

assessment plan. As was indicated previously, the literature reviewed provided very little information about linking

strategic planning and assessment. Nevertheless, with the scarce resources available at most universities these days, it

is necessary to streamline processes and avoid duplication of efforts. In establishing the proper framework for a

successful assessment program that ties to strategic planning, specifically addressing the value of assessment to a

university in its mission statement and/or values statements, is critical in order for faculty, staff, administrators, and

students to embrace the concept. Despite the fact that the literature did not support the need for this, it is

recommended that it be included in the model introduced.

　　　　In conclusion, the results demonstrate that every element in the proposed model is of great importance in

laying the proper foundation for an assessment program that will grow and adapt to the constantly changing

environment of a university.

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Appendix A

Conceptual Framework of Comprehensive Outcomes Assessment Program (COAP) Model

Ideal Element	*Related Literature*

Leadership Commitment
 	
  • **Visible Support and Involvement**
 	
  • **Providing Resources**
	Altschuld & Witkin (2000); Banta (1988); Banta (1997); Banta & Kuh (1998); Banta et.al. (1996); Davis (1989); Gaither (1996); Ewell (1988); Gray (1997); Gray & Diamond (1989); Hurtgen (1997); Karmon & McGilsky (1997); Magruder et.al. (1997); Marchese (1988); Miller (1999); Miller (1988); Palomba (1997); Sell (1989a); Spangehl (1987); Steele (1996); Stewart & Carpenter-Hubin (2000); Terenzini (1989); Underwood (1991); Williford (1997)

Establishing a Centralized Office
 	
  • **Inventory of Existing Activities**
 	
  • **Developing, Administering, and Analyzing Activities**
 	
  • **Consulting on Assessment Activities**
	Banta (1997); Dennison & Banda (1989); Ewell (1987); Ewell (1988); Gray & Diamond (1989); Karmon & McGilsky (1997); Magruder et.al. (1997); Marchese (1988); Miller (1988); Ory (1989); Ory (1992); Ory & Parker (1989); Palomba (1997); Rogers & Gentemann (1989); Sell (1989a); Terenzini (1989); Underwood (1991); Williford (1997); Wilson (1987)

Culture Development • **Open Communication and Perceptions** • **Involvement in the Process** • **Setting Policies and Procedures** • **Training and Education**	Altschuld & Witkin (2000); Baker et.al. (1994); Banta (1988); Banta (1997); Banta & Kuh (1998); Banta & Pike (1989); Banta et.al. (1996); Braskamp (1989); Brown (1989); Davis (1989); Dennison & Banda (1989); Ewell (1987); Ewell (1988); Gaither (1996); Gopinath (1999); Gray (1997); Hindi & Miller (2000); Hurtgen (1997); Hutchings & Marchese (1990); Karmon & McGilsky (1997); Kimmell et.al. (1998); Magruder et.al. (1997); Marchese (1988); Miller (1999); Miller (1988); Muffo (1992); O'Neill et. al. (1999); Ory (1989); Ory (1992); Ory & Parker (1989); Palomba (1997); Rogers & Gentemann (1989); Sell (1989a); Sell (1989b); Shields (2000); Spangehl (1987); Steele (1996); Stewart & Carpenter-Hubin (2000); Terenzini (1989); Underwood (1991); Williford (1997); Wilson (1987)
Partnership with Strategic Planning Efforts • **Mission and Values** • **Goals, Objectives, Strategies and Intended Outcomes**	Altschuld & Witkin (2000); Baker et.al. (1994); Banta (1988); Banta (1997); Banta &Kuh (1998); Banta & Pike (1989); Banta et.al. (1996); Boyer et.al. (1987); Braskamp (1989); Brown (1989); Dennison & Banda (1989); Ewell (1988); Ewell (1996); Gaither (1996); Hindi & Miller (2000); Karmon & McGilsky (1997); Magruder et.al. (1997); Muffo (1992); O'Neill et.al. (1999); Palomba (1997); Rogers & Gentemann (1989); SACS (1987); Steele (1996); Stewart & Carpenter-Hubin (2000); Williford (1997)

Conducting Assessment • **Assessment Methods** • **Developing Assessment Plans**	Altschuld & Witkin (2000); Banta (1988); Banta (1997); Banta & Pike (1989); Banta et.al. (1996); Brown (1989); Davis (1989); Ewell (1988); Gaither (1996); Gopinath (1999); Gray & Diamond (1989); Hindi & Miller (2000); Hutchings & Marchese (1990); Kimmell et.al. (1998); Magruder et.al. (1997); Marchese (1988); Miller (1999); Muffo (1992); O'Neill et.al. (1999); Ory (1989); Ory (1992); Palomba (1997); Sell (1989b); Stewart & Carpenter-Hubin (2000); Terenzini (1989); Underwood (1991); Wilson (1987)
Disseminating Results	Altschuld & Kumar (1995); Altschuld & Witkin (2000); Banta (1988); Banta (1997); Banta & Kuh (1998); Davis (1989); Dennison & Banda (1989); Ewell (1988); Kimmell et.al. (1998); Magruder et.al. (1997); Marchese (1988); Ory (1989); Ory (1992); Palomba (1997); Sell (1989a); Williford (1997)
Utilizing Results	Altschuld & Witkin (2000); Baker et.al. (1994); Banta (1988); Banta (1997); Banta & Kuh (1998); Banta & Pike (1989); Banta et.al. (1996); Braskamp (1989); Davis (1989); Dennison & Banda (1989); Ewell (1987); Ewell (1988); Gray & Diamond (1989); Hindi & Miller (2000); Hurtgen (1997); Hutchings & Marchese (1990);

	Karmon & McGilsky (1997); Kimmell et. al. (1998); Magruder et.al. (1997); Marchese (1988); Muffo (1992); O'Neill et. al. (1999); Ory (1992); Ory & Parker (1989); Palomba (1997); Sell (1989a); Sell (1989b); Spangehl (1987); Steele (1996); Stewart & Carpenter-Hubin (2000); Williford (1997); Wilson (1987)

Appendix B

Operationalized Conceptual Framework of Comprehensive Outcomes Assessment Program (COAP)

Model

Ideal Element	Institutional Practice	Attitude of Administrator
Leadership Commitment • **Visible Support and Involvement** • **Providing Resources**	**Question (#3*)**	**Question (#3a)**
Establishing a Centralized Office • **Inventory of Existing Activities** • **Developing, Administering, and Analyzing Activities** • **Consulting on Assessment Activities**	**Questions (#4-5)** **Coding Sheet (#2-7*)**	**Questions (#4a-5a)**
Culture Development • **Open Communication and Perceptions**	**Questions (#6-9)** **Coding Sheet (#8-11)**	**Questions (#6a-9a)**

• **Involvement in the Process** • **Setting Policies and Procedures** • **Training and Education**		
Partnership with Strategic Planning Efforts • **Mission and Values** • **Goals, Objectives, Strategies and Intended Outcomes**	**Questions (#10-11)** **Coding Sheet (#12-13)**	**Questions (#10a-11a)**
Conducting Assessment • **Assessment Methods** • **Developing Assessment Plans**	**Questions (#9,12)** **Coding Sheet (#14-15)**	**Questions (#9a,12a)**
Disseminating Results	**Question (#13)** **Coding Sheet (#16)**	**Question (#13a)**
Utilizing Results	**Question (#14)**	**Question (#14a)**

*Note that Item #1 is for preliminary screening and Item #2 is for identifying appropriate web addresses for content analysis review.

Appendix C

Relative Importance of Elements Within COAP Model

Element (n)	Not at all 1	Of little 2	Don't know 3	Some-what 4	Very 5	Mean
Comprehensive Outcomes Assessment Program (n=91*)	0	2	2	18	68	4.7
Leadership Commitment (n=90)	0	1	1	11	77	4.8
Establishing a Centralized Office Centralized Office (n=88)	0	2	17	29	40	4.2
Inventory of Existing Activities (n=86)	1	2	12	31	40	4.2
Culture Development Open Communication/Positive Perceptions (n=90)	0	0	1	18	71	4.8
Employee Involvement (n=89)	2	5	14	39	29	4.0

Established policies/procedures or guidelines (n=87**)	2	0	10	24	50	4.4
Training and Education (n=87)	0	3	4	33	47	4.5
Partnership with Strategic Planning Efforts **Addressed in Mission and/or Value Statements (n=88)**	2	7	18	30	31	3.9
Linked to Strategic Planning Process (n=86)	0	1	4	18	63	4.7
Conducting Assessment **Individual Assessment Plans (n=87)**	0	1	5	23	58	4.6
Disseminating Results (n=87*)	3	2	15	25	41	4.2
Utilizing Results (n=88)	1	0	1	18	68	4.7

*One person responded with a 4.5 rating, which was included in calculating the mean.

**One person responded with a 6.0 rating, which was included in calculating the mean.

Appendix D

Cumulative Institutional Assessment Practices

Survey Question	Total Responses	% Yes
Does your institution have a comprehensive or university-wide outcomes assessment program in place?	**91**	**67**
Leadership Commitment **Do top leaders in your institution provide support for assessment activities in the form of direct involvement and resources?**	**86**	**91**
Establishing a Centralized Office **Does your institution have a centralized office that coordinates assessment activities across the university (i.e., training; consulting; developing, administering, and analyzing data)?**	**90**	**61**
Has your institution ever conducted an inventory of existing assessment activities across the university?	**88**	**90**
Culture Development **Do you believe there are open communication/ positive perceptions among faculty, staff, and administration regarding assessment efforts at your institution?**	**75**	**67**
Do all employees (faculty, staff, administrators) have the		

opportunity to become involved in assessment activities at your institution?	86	73
Does your institution have established university-wide policies/procedures or guidelines regarding assessment activities?	88	68
Does your institution provide training and education to employees on assessment and assessment methods?	88	68
Partnership with Strategic Planning Efforts Does your institution's mission and/or value statements specifically address assessment activities?	88	39
Are your assessment activities linked to your university planning process?	86	74
Conducting Assessment Do all departments (administrative and academic) within your institution have individual assessment plans in place?	88	44
Disseminating Results Are assessment results disseminated throughout your institution?	88	65
Utilizing Results Are assessment results utilized for program improvement or	86	95

modification at your institution?		

Appendix E

Cumulative Web Analysis Results

Issue Addressed in Website n=45	% Yes
Comprehensive program in place	64
Establishing a Centralized Office Centralized office in place	42
Inventory of existing activities conducted	27
Developing assessment activities	38
Administering assessment activities	36
Analyzing assessment activities	27
Consulting on assessment activities	40
Culture Development Open discussion of assessment activities	71
Employee involvement	27
Policies/procedures included	47
Training/education addressed	42
Partnership with Strategic Planning Efforts Assessment clearly addressed in mission/values statements	13

Tied to strategic planning	**51**
Conducting Assessment **Assessment methods discussed**	**62**
Assessment plans discussed	**69**
Disseminating Results **Established procedures included**	**53**

Appendix F

Comprehensive Outcomes Assessment Program (COAP) Model Summary Results

Element	Practiced at Institution %Yes*	Importance Mean**	Mode (n)
Comprehensive Outcomes Assessment Program	67	4.7	Very Important
Leadership Commitment	91	4.8	Very Important
Establishing a Centralized Office Centralized Office	61	4.2	Very Important
Inventory of Existing Activities	80	4.2	Very Important
Culture Development Open Communication/ Positive Perceptions	67	4.8	Very Important

Employee Involvement	**73**	**4.0**	**Somewhat important**
Policies/Procedures or Guidelines	**68**	**4.4**	**Very Important**
Training and Education	**68**	**4.5**	**Very Important**
Partnership with Strategic Planning Efforts			
Addressed in Mission and/or Values Statements	**39**	**3.9**	**Very Important**
Linked to Strategic Planning Process	**74**	**4.7**	**Very Important**
Conducting Assessment			
Individual Assessment Plans	**44**	**4.6**	**Very Important**
Disseminating Results	**65**	**4.2**	**Very Important**
Utilizing Results	**95**	**4.7**	**Very Important**

*Actual sample size can be found in Appendix C

**Actual sample size can be found in Appendix E

Endnotes

i.**This is a summary of a major Applied Research Project. For additional information and in-depth detail, please refer to the actual research paper.**

ii.**A full discussion of these three approaches can be found in Kimmel et. al., 1998, pp. 856-857.**

iii.**This is the classic view of the Quality movement. Although faculty adamantly disagree with this philosophy, funding sources may relate to the overall point and the university administration cannot ignore its essential validity.**

iv.**Chapter 2056 of the Government Code requires each state agency to prepare and submit a strategic plan. Senate Bill 1563, enacted during the Seventy-sixth Legislature, Regular Session, requires state agencies to develop customer service standards and implement customer satisfaction assessment plans. Agency and institution Strategic Plans are the vehicle for submitting a Report on Customer Service required by Sec. 2113.002(c) of the bill.**

v.**It must be acknowledged that every college and university is unique and any identified model must be adapted to fit the needs of the constituents.**

vi.**The Comprehensive Outcomes Assessment Program (COAP) model is an example of a "Practical Ideal Type" conceptual framework developed by Shields. The COAP model is both exploratory (preliminary) and prescriptive (provides guidance for action).**

vii.**See for example Banta et.al. (1997), Ewell (1988), Terenzini (1989), Ory (1992), Williford (1997), and Underwood (1991).**

viii.**See Underwood (1991) for detailed techniques on developing an assessment inventory.**

ix.**See Altschuld & Witkin (2000); Baker et.al. (1994); Banta (1988); Banta (1997); Banta & Kuh (1998); Banta & Pike (1989); Banta et.al. (1996); Braskamp (1989); Brown (1989); Davis (1989); Dennison & Banda (1989); Ewell (1987); Ewell (1988); Gaither (1996); Gopinath (1999); Gray (1997); Hindi & Miller (2000); Hurtgen (1997); Hutchings & Marchese (1990); Karmon & McGilsky (1997); Kimmell et.al. (1998); Magruder et.al. (1997); Marchese (1988); Miller (1999); Miller (1988); Muffo (1992); O'Neill et. al. (1999); Ory (1989); Ory (1992); Ory & Parker (1989); Palomba (1997); Rogers & Gentemann (1989); Sell (1989a); Sell (1989b); Shields (2000); Spangehl (1987); Steele (1996); Stewart & Carpenter-Hubin (2000); Terenzini (1989); Underwood (1991); Williford (1997); Wilson (1987)**

x.**See Altschuld & Witkin (2000); Baker et.al. (1994); Banta (1988); Banta (1997); Banta & Kuh (1998); Banta & Pike (1989); Banta et.al. (1996); Braskamp (1989); Brown (1989); Davis (1989); Dennison & Banda (1989); Ewell (1987); Ewell (1988); Gaither (1996); Gopinath (1999); Gray (1997); Hindi & Miller (2000); Hurtgen (1997); Hutchings & Marchese (1990); Karmon & McGilsky (1997); Kimmell et.al. (1998); Magruder et.al. (1997); Marchese (1988); Miller (1999); Miller (1988); Muffo (1992); O'Neill et. al. (1999); Ory (1989); Ory (1992); Ory & Parker (1989); Palomba (1997); Rogers & Gentemann (1989); Sell (1989a); Sell (1989b); Shields (2000); Spangehl (1987); Steele (1996); Stewart & Carpenter-Hubin (2000); Terenzini (1989); Underwood (1991); Williford (1997); Wilson (1987)**

xi. See Altschuld & Witkin (2000); Baker et.al. (1994); Banta (1988); Banta (1997); Banta & Kuh (1998); Banta & Pike (1989); Banta et.al. (1996); Boyer et.al. (1987); Braskamp (1989); Brown (1989); Dennison & Banda (1989); Ewell (1988); Ewell (1996); Gaither (1996); Hindi & Miller (2000); Magruder et.al (1997); Muffo (1992); O'Neill et.al. (1999); Palomba (1997); Rogers & Gentemann (1989); Steele (1996); Stewart & Carpenter-Hubin (2000); and Williford (1997).

xii. Assessment and strategic planning can also be linked to a larger Quality initiative for continued process improvement if this type of initiative exists within the university.

xiii. An excellent reference source for assessment methods is *Assessment in Practice* by Banta et. al. (1997).

xiv. See Altschuld & Witkin (2000); Banta (1997); Gray & Diamond (1989); Magruder et.al. (1997); Ory (1989); Sell (1989a); and Terenzini (1989)] .

xv. Many of the respondents indicated on the survey that their websites are also in the development stages or are being modified.

xvi. Again, one reason for these discrepancies in percentages between the questionnaire and web analyses could be because of the limited information available on the web pages.

xvii. The use of web analysis as a secondary research method for gathering data on the seven elements of the COAP model may not have been appropriate for increasing the validity or reliability of the data collected via the survey instrument. This is suggested based on the results presented in Appendix E. The overall results were very spread out and there was no consistency with the survey results. In reviewing individual assessment websites, it was clear that some were much better presented than others. It appeared that some sites were in the very early stages of development, as some of the comprehensive assessment programs were in their early stages of development. Because the Web is a relatively new technology, institutions may not yet be utilizing websites. Another possible reason for the inconsistency in site reviews is the fact that assessment responsibilities at some institutions are shared by multiple offices and/or university committees, and the web address provided could have been only part of what was actually available at that institution. There is no set standard of what should be included on an assessment website, so there are no "bad" sites, per se.