

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE ASSESSMENT-
OF-LEARNING PROGRAMS IN THE HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION
REGION

by

RAY D. ROTHGEB

B.M.E., Wichita State University, 1968

M.M.E., Wichita State University, 1973

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Educational Leadership
College of Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

2008

Abstract

This study used a mixed method designed to explore differences in institutional dynamics (Type and Accreditation Method), administrative qualities and characteristics (CAO/CEO Tenure and Management Style), and program support (Money Spent on Assessment and Mission Language) for community college assessment-of-learning programs in the Higher Learning Commission region. Chief Academic Officers from 83 “Community Colleges” in 17 states responded to an on-line quantitative survey (Assessment-of-Student-Learning Program Success [ASLPS]). *T* test analysis indicated significant differences in ASLPS scores when comparing AQIP with PEAQ institutions and when comparing institutions that included assessment-of-learning language in their mission statements with those that did not. Ten Chief Academic Officers, representing institutions with highest and lowest composite ASLPS scores, were interviewed for the qualitative study. Five “Traits of Perceived Successful Assessment-of-Learning Programs” were derived from the qualitative research.

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Approved by:

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Dr. W. Franklin Spikes

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CHAPTER 1:

THE PROBLEM

Introduction

As community college assessment efforts evolve into programs designed to measure and improve learning, the role of top administration has continued to increase in importance. The nature of the involvement of a community college's Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Chief Academic Officer (CAO)—as well as the effect of type, and the amount of resources committed to assessment—become significant contributors to the improvement of student learning. Examining the influence these factors have upon the efficacy of the institution's assessment-of-learning program may, therefore, help institutions develop more effective assessment-of-learning programs while also giving other institutions what they need to replicate success.

Overview of the Issues

For nearly two decades assessment has been the center of the issue of accountability in higher education (Banta, 2001; Banta, Lund, Black, & Olander, 1996; Cress, 1996; Evenbeck & Kahn, 2001; Frye, 2008; Huba & Freed, 2000; Wilde, 2006). Recent emphasis has challenged community colleges to consider the value of services in meeting constituents' needs. Research has shown value in obtaining more education and higher degrees. Cohen and Brawer (1989) ascribe value "to increased income, higher-status jobs obtained, or higher degree attainment" (p. 384). With such expectations on educational systems to deliver added value and demonstrate accountability, the need for successful assessment-of-student-learning programs has become a necessity.

Accountability demands have been met with a wide and varying assortment of initiatives. An important component of these is assessment of learning. Banta et al. (1996) emphasize this

relationship: “Assessment...is an important component in demonstrating institutional accountability” (p. 61). Burke (2002) suggests that “governors, legislators, and coordinating boards” across the country were so enamored with assessment by the 1980s that they “mandated assessment policies in two-thirds of the states” (pp. 4-5). Greater accountability is called for by a variety of stakeholders (Suskie, 2006b, p. 15). Suskie (2006b) indicates that “legislators, government officials, accrediting agencies, board members, employers, and students and their families are increasingly asking for evidence that higher education institutions are providing programs and services of quality” (p. 15). Assessment initiatives have included dedicated publications, such as *Assessment Update*, assessment conferences, and in-service events throughout the country. The need to identify assessment-of-learning programs that successfully reflect institutional mission is clear. Successful programs should be able to measure learning outcomes that lead to improvement, should be ongoing, and should be cost effective (Banta, 1994; Banta et al., 1996; Ewell, 1988, 2001; Heaney, 1990; Ratcliff, 1992).

Nature of the Problem

Although states and accrediting agencies are requiring assessment to meet accreditation criteria, assessment-of-learning program success is inconsistent in community colleges across the country (Banta, 1994; Ewell, 1988; Palmer, 1994). A part of this inconsistency may be attributed to changing institutional definitions of assessment as a result of varying institutional dynamics, administrative qualities and characteristics, and support for assessment. Woldt (2004) indicates that “successfully completing the assessment process and using the resulting findings to inform institutional decision-making processes is one of the most difficult, least understood, and least researched phases on the assessment process.” The Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Schools and Colleges (HLC) and the five other regional accrediting

agencies require some form of assessment of learning in order for the institution to meet accreditation criteria. Each has statements, indicating the need for developing and providing evidence of an assessment program that includes an assessment-of-learning component (Higher Learning Commission [HLC], 2003; Southern Association of Colleges and Schools [SACS], 2004; Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities [NCCU], 2005; Middle States Commission on Higher Education [MSCHE], 2006; New England Association of Schools and Colleges [NEASC], 2005; Western Association of Schools and Colleges [WASC], 2004). The Southern Association requires the development of a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) that “is part of an ongoing planning and evaluation process” (SACS, 2004). The Higher Learning Commission (2003) ties assessment directly to what students learn and calls for evidence of learning and teaching effectiveness, demonstrating that the institution is fulfilling its educational mission and that its “goals for student learning outcomes are clearly stated for each educational program and make effective assessment possible” (p. 117).

One attempt at providing a regional measurement of an assessment-of-learning tool was the one created by the Higher Learning Commission. In an effort to “assist institutions in understanding and strengthening their programs for assessment of academic achievement,” the Higher Learning Commission (2002, March) identified characteristics of assessment-of-learning programs and placed them on a three-stage continuum to provide “markers of the progress institutions have made in developing their assessment programs” (p. 17). These characteristics were the result of research on content found in The Higher Learning Commission team reports. These characteristics were intended for marking an institution’s progress toward development of a successful assessment-of-learning program (HLC, March 2002). Characteristics were clustered into four groups—Institutional Culture, Shared Responsibility, Institutional Support, and

Efficacy of Assessment—and distributed over three levels: Beginning Implementation of Assessment Programs, Making Progress in Implementing Assessment Programs, and Maturing Stages of Continuous Improvement. Although this measurement tool seems appropriate to self-evaluate progress in an institution's assessment-of-learning program, its long lists of characteristics made it cumbersome for use in research.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine differences between the success of community college assessment-of-learning programs and institutional dynamics, administrative qualities and characteristics, and assessment-of-learning program support of community colleges in the Higher Learning Commission region as measured by a survey of CAOs. The results of this study could help provide community college administrators with the knowledge of institutional dynamics, administrative qualities and characteristics, and needed support to create or enhance their institutional assessment-of-student-learning programs. Although this research is based on self-evaluations by the Chief Academic Officer of the surveyed institutions, the data is useful as a tool by which to measure the assessment-of-learning program success, as it is the CAOs who are primarily responsible for these programs.

An examination of the literature on assessment of student learning in community colleges does not reveal that selected aspects of institutional dynamics, administrative qualities and characteristics, and institutional program support have been examined to see how these factors collectively or individually affect an institution's assessment-of-learning program. In Peterson and Augustine's (2000) study, institutional characteristics of an assessment-of-learning program are suggested as one *part* of the success of public institutions of higher education within all six accrediting regions. However, Peterson and Augustine's study combines the administrative and

faculty factors of the assessment-of-learning programs and does not limit the study to community colleges within the Higher Learning Commission region. From this study this researcher hopes to better understand the influence of institutional dynamics (type, and accreditation status), administrative qualities and characteristics (CEO/CAO tenure and CAO decision-making practice), and institutional support on perceived successful assessment-of-learning programs in community colleges in the Higher Learning Commission region.

Research Questions

Eight questions were explored in this research.

1. Is there a difference between the perceived level of success of community college assessment programs and the type (urban/rural) of institution? If so, what is the nature of that difference?
2. Is there a difference between the perceived level of success of community college assessment programs and the accreditation method (AQIP or PEAQ) of the institution? If so, what is the nature of that difference?
3. Is there a difference between the perceived level of success of community college assessment-of-learning programs and an institution's CEO's tenure? If so, what is the nature of that difference?
4. Is there a difference between the perceived level of success of community college assessment-of-learning programs and an institution's CAO's tenure? If so, what is the nature of that difference?
5. Is there a difference between the perceived level of success of community college assessment-of-learning programs and an institution's decision-making practice (top-down/bottom-up). If so, what is the nature of that difference?

6. Is there a difference between the perceived level of success of community college assessment-of-learning programs and an institution's mission emphasis? If so, what is the nature of that difference?
7. Is there a difference between the perceived level of success of community college assessment-of-learning programs and the percentage of general fund money spent on assessment of learning? If so, what is the nature of that difference?
8. What administrative or institutional constructs or phenomena are consistent among institutions with perceived successful assessment-of-learning programs and how do they contribute to program success, as measured by qualitative interviews of selected institutions?

Data from the first seven research questions were used to determine which institutions were used for the qualitative study. Question number eight was addressed qualitatively.

Interviews were held with CAOs of selected institutions' programs to identify constructs or phenomena that were consistent among institutions with perceived successful assessment-of-learning programs and to explore their contribution to that perceived success.

Significance of the Study

Understanding the factors that influence assessment-of-learning programs may contribute to the strategies used by community colleges to focus more efficiently on affordable assessment-of-learning programs that effectively measure student learning. Examining assessment-of-learning programs as they are affected by key administrative personnel changes may reveal qualities and characteristics that may significantly influence assessment-of-learning programs (Miller, 1988). Likewise, categorizing college data by type (urban or rural) and accreditation status (AQIP or PEAQ) may help college administrators know where they are on the assessment

continuum and where they should be. Similarly, seeing how mission emphasis and funding support contributes to assessment efforts may better help colleges budget accordingly.

As community colleges turn their attention toward factors that affect success of their assessment-of-learning programs, consistencies among programs could begin to appear, giving institutions an easier reference to accountable assessment-of-learning programs. This study is, therefore, significant to community colleges that struggle to develop and maintain assessment-of-learning programs that meet the needs of the public, local boards, state requirements and accrediting agencies, subsequently achieving academic accountability. Knowing institutional dynamics, administrative qualities and characteristics, and mission emphasis and monetary support that could most likely produce a successful assessment-of-learning program could lend consistency to community college assessment-of-learning programs.

Limitations of the Study

Research generally holds certain inherent limitations. Limitations within the context of this study follow:

1. The Higher Learning Commission region was the focus of this study.
2. Private two-year, public two-year “colleges” (not defined as community colleges), and two-year technical colleges were not included.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions were used in this study:

Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP): An accreditation program for institutions of higher education that “infuses the principles and benefits of continuous improvement into the culture of colleges and universities by providing an alternative process through which an already-accredited institution can maintain its accreditation from the Higher

Learning Commission” (AQIP, n.d., ¶ 1). AQIP is an alternative to the traditional self-study approach to reaccreditation which is now identified as Program to Evaluate and Advance Quality (PEAQ).

Administrative qualities and characteristics:

- a. CEO’s tenure—The number of years the CEO has been in that position with the institution.
- b. CAO’s tenure—The number of years the CAO has been in that position with the institution.
- c. Decision-making practice—Direction decisions are made about the institution’s assessment-of-learning program (top-down/bottom-up) and qualities of the administrator that affect the assessment-of-learning program.

Assessment: “Assessment is the systematic collection, review, and use of information about educational programs undertaken for the purpose of improving student learning and development” (Palomba & Banta, 1999, p. 4).

Assessment-of-learning program: Organized activity that is centered on a strategy by which assessment measures “the degree to which the college is meetings [sic] its performance standards” (Hudgins, 1997, p. ix) as they relate to improving student learning.

Chief Academic Officer (CAO): Administrator responsible for decision making and oversight of all academic programs of the community college or campus in a multi-campus institution.

Chief Executive Officer (CEO): Administrator responsible for the operation of the community college or campus in a multi-campus institution.

Consistency: Use of common elements to achieve a model assessment-of-learning program, allowing replication of successful assessment programs among community colleges.

Decision-Making Practice: The direction from which decisions affecting assessment are made—top-down or bottom-up—as it relates to management style and practice.

Full-time Enrollment (FTE): Full-time undergraduate enrollment headcount from the Higher Learning Commission’s directory of “Affiliated Institutions” (HLC, 2007).

Institutional Support: Institutional support in terms of mission emphasis and resources.

- a. Mission emphasis—Language in the institution’s mission statement that clearly emphasizes student learning.
- b. Resources—Amount of institutional funds spent on assessment of learning in FY2006.

Institutional dynamics: Institutional behavior based on location (type) and method of accreditation.

- a. Type—urban or rural.
- b. Accreditation method—accreditation through the Higher Learning Commission as either an AQIP or PEAQ institution.

Level(s) of Success: For this study perceived levels of success were determined by the accumulated score of an institution on the Assessment-of-Student-Learning Program Success (ASLPS) survey (Appendix A).

Program to Evaluate and Advance Quality (PEAQ): An accreditation program for institutions of higher education that “employs a five-step comprehensive evaluation process to determine continued accredited status” (HLC, 2003, p. 2.2-1).

Rural: This definition is based on the 2000 census which classifies “territory, population and housing” as rural, if it is “not classified as urban” (U.S. Government, 2002).

Tenure: The number of years the current CEO or CAO has served in that position.

Urban: An urban area is defined as having a “minimum residential population of at least 50,000 people” (U.S. Government, 2002).

Summary

Assessment is a critical element in measuring instructional effectiveness and meeting accrediting agency demands. A wide array of assessment options has created some ambiguity in what is working and what is successful in community college assessment efforts. Although community colleges are responding to state demands and meeting accrediting agencies’ mandates, they are also attempting to design meaningful assessment-of-learning programs that will measure student learning. Institutions striving to establish successful assessment-of-learning programs are challenged to examine those factors that achieve that goal. Questions begin to arise about the programs’ contribution to student learning. Does location of the community college in a rural or urban area have an impact? Does participation in the Higher Learning Commission’s AQIP program affect assessment-of-learning programs? How much does the tenure of either the CEO or the CAO and their decision-making style impact the assessment-of-learning program? How does mission emphasis and the amount of resources dedicated to assessment-of-learning impact the quality of the assessment-of-learning program? Efforts to identify characteristics of successful assessment-of-learning programs could benefit all stakeholders.

This study has examined the differences in institutional dynamics, administrative qualities and characteristics, as well as support for assessment-of-learning programs to perceived successful community college assessment-of-learning programs in the Higher Learning

Commission region. Understanding these effects and their importance to success may contribute to the replication of success of assessment-of-learning programs, affecting both the time and money necessary to achieve success and further clarify assessment-of-learning program's effectiveness and consistency with institutional mission and purpose.

CHAPTER II:

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Before one can recognize what variables affect successful assessment-of-learning programs at the community college level and understand the need to identify consistent characteristics in order to replicate that success, one must first realize the reason for the assessment in the community college environment. Participants and constituents recognize the value of student learning through the data that assessment provides. A review of the literature supports the necessity of assessment programs in order to improve effectiveness and quality of student learning. To accomplish this, literature also supports the need for a clear mission with both administrative and faculty backing. Accountability to the learning institution's constituents must then be satisfied by matching accomplishments to mission; hence, the need for a successful assessment-of-learning program in community colleges. In order to establish the assessment environment that has developed since the *Nation at Risk* (NCEE, 1983) report which is addressed in the first section of the Review called A Seminal Study, this researcher explored Institutional Effectiveness; Accountability: Community College, Legislative Bodies, and Funding; Assessment: Assessment Areas, Assessment Planning, and Improvement of Student Learning; and Accrediting Agencies: Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) and Regional Agencies. A second section to the literature review begins with the portion called Successful Programs and is followed by areas specifically of interest to the research in this study. These sections are explained in the introductory paragraph to the second portion of the literature review.

Hudgins cites Peter Ewell who suggests that “the underlying goal of any organization is to improve effectiveness” (Hudgins, 1997, p. xi) and Astin (1983) accedes that “the primary obligation of all higher education institutions is to enhance the cognitive skills and personal development of the student” (p. 135). Angelo and Cross (1993) emphasize student learning in their classroom assessment workbook. They indicate that all colleges and universities in the United States “share one fundamental goal: to produce the highest possible quality of student learning” (p. 3). To accomplish this fundamental goal best, every community college is faced in some way with the issues purported in this Review of Literature.

A Seminal Study

Much of the impetus for assessment of student learning is the result of a string of assessment and institutional effectiveness reports and activities, stemming from the 1981 formation of the National Commission on Excellence in Education (NCEE, 1983) and, consequentially, its 1983 report, *A Nation at Risk*. Former Secretary of Education, T. H. Bell, created the Commission as a result of his concern about negative public perception of the educational system in the United States (NCEE, 1983). Soliciting the "support of all who care about our future," the Secretary noted that he was establishing the Commission based on his "responsibility to provide leadership, constructive criticism, and effective assistance to schools and universities." Included in the Commission's charter was the charge to assess “the quality of teaching and learning in ... colleges, and universities” (NCEE, 1983). In the report, which had far-reaching impact, Bell expresses concern about not having a “coherent continuum of learning.” As a result, Burke (2002) suggests that, “Criticism of American higher education and student learning came from all quarters of the political spectrum” (p. 3).

Calls for accountability from the public and legislative bodies ensued. Townsend and Twombly (2001) cite the U.S. Department of Education's recognition of the need for accountability in higher education, which in turn has "led to state mandates and accreditation standards ... requiring that the value of programs and services be demonstrated" (p. 59). Assessment became an integral part of measuring the effectiveness of institutions of higher education across the country (Angelo & Cross, 1993; Cohen, 1994; Ewell, 2001; Green & Hayward, 1997; and O'Banion, 1997) with accrediting agencies responding and meeting accountability demands by adding or enhancing criteria to include assessment of student learning. Clearly, assessment of student learning was an obvious next step. Banta (2004) suggests that "now the focus in assessment in two-year as well as four-year institutions has moved from institutional effectiveness to student learning" (p. 4).

Institutional Effectiveness

Although effectiveness can be of concern at all levels of an institution, Hudgins (1997) suggests that institutional effectiveness is "a more global process" (p. ix). In a study by Richardson and Wolverson (1994), effective educational practices of selected community colleges that reported significantly high levels of effective behaviors important to student success were examined. These case studies explained how and why significant differences in faculty performance exist. High performing institutions which "emphasized student achievement and brought people together, ... expected more from their faculty and defined their roles to encompass a broader range of responsibilities" (pp. 45-46). Departments were supported as places where faculty could gain leadership experience and incubate innovative ideas and where faculty were more likely to participate in governance. Professional development opportunities for

faculty were systematically linked to institutional priorities, and faculty involvement in decision making allowed for both faculty and administration to influence outcomes.

Burgquist and Armstrong (1986) submit, “The quality of an educational program can be adequately assessed only if one can determine the extent to which the program has directly contributed to the desired outcome” (p. 2). Student learning outcomes are easily based on pretest and post-test measures. Burgquist and Armstrong (1986) refer to this as the definition of “value-added” quality. The interrelationship of “value-added” with input and output measures will determine the “quality of an education program” (p. 2). Astin (1983) suggests that value-added capitalizes on feedback, “enhancing the educational effectiveness of institutions” (p. 137). Vaughan and Templin (1987) note the benefit of “value-added” as an indicator of institutional effectiveness (p. 237). They cite Astin (1983) on issues facing the community college: “In value-added terms, the quality of an institution is based not on the performance level of the students it admits, but on the changes or improvements in performance that the institution is able to affect in its students” (p. 135). Further, Astin comments that The Commission on the Higher Education of Minorities “recommended that all institutions...revise their traditional testing and grading procedures to reflect and enhance the ‘value-added’ mission of the institution” (p. 135).

Searching for a systematic approach to assessment of student learning is confounded by the sheer number of programs in existence in varying stages of implementation. In many cases institutions are advised to do what works best for that institution. Typically, consultants advise: “Find something and adapt it to your institution.” Walleri and Seybert (1993) indicate that addressing institutional effectiveness in the community college presents a different set of problems from the four-year colleges and universities. They suggest:

Measures of institutional effectiveness common to four-year colleges and universities (for example, number of graduates or proportion of graduates to students admitted) are in most cases not applicable to community colleges. As a result, assessment in two-year colleges should involve a broad-based approach to evaluation of overall institutional effectiveness (p. 88).

An assessment approach that is broad-based and crosses all disciplines and levels of operation contributes to an institution's effectiveness. Merely assessing isolated programs may not be effective or consistent with the institution's mission. It is the interrelationships of institutional components that define the institution's operation.

The accountability movement is strong. Addressing accountability issues with effective measures is in demand. The need for tax-supported institutions to continue to be accountable for accomplishing what they say they are about has inertia that, unless transferred to another movement, will continue well into the future. Over a decade ago Banta (1994) described the demand for accountability as a "noose tightening around higher education institutions," stating that "the number and variety of governmental regulations and reporting requirements are growing rapidly" (p. 400).

Peter Senge (1994, p. 7) talks of committing oneself to life-long learning and achieving *personal mastery*. How will America's community colleges know if they have contributed to such achievement? Cross & Gardener (1997, p. ix) believe that assessment-of-student-learning outcomes has become a "powerful lever" for "focusing attention on learning" in the twenty-first century. Assessing the effectiveness of America's community colleges allows the education community to show the tax-paying public that they are getting a lot for their money.

Accountability

Accountability measures are expressed in terms of measurable outcomes through some type of assessment, whether it is a course, program, or a group of broad-based institutional effectiveness measures. Laanan (2001) defines accountability as “*what* performance to measure and *how* to measure it” (p. 59). This concern for accountability is not new. Angelo and Cross (1993) pointed out that in the 1980s, “assessment usually was undertaken for the purpose of improving effectiveness at system, campus, or program levels” (p. 7). They also state that educational quality issues lead to an interest in developing better indicators of student learning.

Although assessment professionals have clearly linked assessment, institutional effectiveness, and accountability, not all involved agree that they are inseparable. Green and Hayward (1997) believe that a multitude of “knotty questions” surfaces with the issue of accountability: Who defines the measures of performance, and are the measures the same for different types of institutions (pp. 14-15)?

Resnick states clearly, however, the role assessment plays in accountability: “Without assessment there can be no accountability” (Resnick, 1987, p. 20). Kuh (2001) indicates, “State legislators, accreditors [sic], parents, employers, and others want to know what students are learning and what they can do” (p. 10). Kuh warns that “some external entity will impose its own approach” to assessing student learning if colleges and universities do not (p. 12).

Community Colleges

The community college certainly has not escaped the outcry for accountability. Cohen (1994) indicates the need to document institutional efforts in the community colleges “so that students, the public, and the professional community understand how the institutions use their resources in fulfilling their missions.” Cress (1996) cites McMillan who posits that “community

colleges have been called upon to ‘prove’ their efficiency and effectiveness” to accreditation bodies, legislators, taxpayers, and parents (§ 1).

Pressure for community colleges to measure effectiveness and, consequently, the effectiveness of student learning as a means of accountability has come from a number of sources. Although one would like to believe that momentum for effectiveness is from within the institution itself, driven by a collegial desire for educational quality, recent literature suggests it is not. The pressure for accountability comes from a number of stakeholders. Banta, Black, Kahn, and Jackson (2004) suggest that commitment to assessment from external and internal stakeholders is important and they must “begin early and persist” (p. 8). Cress (1996) cites McMillan in identifying four stakeholders of accountability: “accreditation bodies, legislators, taxpayers, and parents.” Although Kuh (2001) suggests that “State legislators, accreditors [sic], parents, employers and others have a stake in knowing what students are learning” (p. 10), Green and Hayward (1997) leave little question about the need for public higher education institutions to be accountable to “taxpayers, who are usually represented by government officials” (p. 13).

Whatever relationship exists between assessment and accountability, Richardson (1983) expresses the inevitable: “Community colleges will not escape public pressures for accountability” (p. 186). The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC, 1997) indicated that colleges had no choice but to yield to mandates of effectiveness reporting (p. vii). The AACC and Roueche put forward the notion that accountability is associated with the institution’s responsibility to its external publics in implementing its mission (AACC, 1997; Roueche et al., 1997). In a survey of community college presidents, Vaughan and Weisman (1998) identify accountability and understanding institutional mission “as the major issues facing the community college in the next few years” (p. 143).

A common theme by the 1990s is echoed in the appeal to community colleges to respond to the call for accountability or face more difficult times in the future. Dziech (1994) cites Keller regarding the impact of outside forces affecting change in higher education:

Three quarters of all change at most institutions of higher learning is now triggered by outside forces such as directives from the state board of higher education, an economic recession, migration patterns, a change in the supply of gasoline, the wider use of records and cassettes, a governor's change of politics, a new law from Washington, a sweeping court decision about a major affirmative action case, and the shifts in job markets (pp. 454-455).

Legislative Bodies

Although accrediting agencies have been in a position to leverage assessment within the scope of institutional effectiveness, it has been public outcry through elected officials and legislative bodies that has prompted governmental response. Public pressure for tax-supported institutions to be accountable for mission achievement has increased. Repeatedly, assessment researchers insisted that assessment must be tied to mission and that institutions must be accountable based on that mission (AACC, 1997; Boggs & Michael, 1997; Dugan & Hernon, 2006; MSCHE, 2006).

As the pressure for accountability draws more response for assessment, more and more state legislatures are linking assessment to institutional effectiveness as a means of meeting accountability demands (Serban, 2004, p. 23). Dugan (2006b) suggests that the “most visible stakeholders concerned with higher education institution accountability” may be the federal and state government (p. 50). He cites Hearn and Holdsworth who believe that state “performance-based” funding could be used to target “desired learning indicators,” and could “strategically

shape institutional performance behaviors by affecting the allocation and application of resources across and within institutions” (Dugan, 2006a, p. 101).

Kansas Senate Bill 345 provides incentives for state institutions of higher education to share a pool of state funds based on achievement of self-designated institutional effectiveness goals. In the summer of 1997 the Kansas Association of Community College Trustees (KACCT, 1998) sanctioned a task force to design a data collection system, “modeled on a nationally recognized measure of effectiveness” (p. x). The goal of this endeavor was to “allow for possible replication of procedures and comparison of common data elements to other states” (p. x). The importance of this effort was confirmed with the passing of Senate Bill 345. The report states:

As citizens and the legislators of Kansas seek greater accountability for the expenditure of both local and general fund dollars, and as colleges embark on developing long-range planning initiatives, the importance of having in place a data system measuring community college effectiveness is imperative (KACCT, 1998, p. 2).

The final report encouraged the Kansas Council of Community College Presidents to endorse and adopt thirteen core indicators to “measure community college effectiveness.” Core indicators cover everything from use of facilities to student satisfaction; core indicator number four is “Measure of Critical Skills” (KACCT, 1998, p. 8). The definition of this measure encompasses student performance “in targeted courses and on institutional assessments that measure the development of math, reading, writing, and critical thinking skills.”

Accountability and assessment of learning have become an integral part of higher education, of which the community college plays an important role. Laanan (2001) suggests, “accountability in higher education and, more specifically, in community colleges is definitely

here to stay,” and that “... states are in the process of developing, designing, and operationalizing [sic] their responses to the various federal initiatives” (p. 69).

Funding

Most community colleges depend on some form of public funding. Therefore, it is not surprising that accountability would come from the public and public agencies. Ewell (2001) insists that employers and elected officials are demanding higher order literacy and communications skills from college and university graduates (p. 1). According to Ewell the public is not just looking “at price, but at the underlying quality of a college credential and what it will buy them in the employment marketplace” (p. 1). Laanan (2001) cites a 1988 California bill that requires the California Community Colleges Board of Governors to develop an “educational and fiscal accountability system,” the purpose of which is to “maintain and improve the quality of the institution and enhance the community colleges” (p. 12).

Over two decades ago a number of national task forces “reported a declining confidence in the value of a college degree” (Hudgins, 1997, p. x). O’Banion (1997) indicates that “a full one-percent of the instructional budgets of all of Missouri’s public state universities and community colleges” was set aside in the 1996-97 school year “to fund rewards for faculty-designed projects to improve student outcomes” (p. 95). He suggests: “The idea that public colleges and universities should be funded, at least in part, upon their demonstrated performance in achieving student learning has circulated among state officials throughout the country, and a few have put funding where their mouths are” (p. 95). Like Missouri, Tennessee based a portion of its funding for “public colleges and universities on the assessment of student competence” (Banta, 2001, p. 7).

Assessment

Assessment as a means of improving educational quality certainly provided opportunities to meet accountability demands. In this section, literature provides insight into the broad nature of the types of assessment that addresses accountability concerns while meeting the need to assess student competence.

Classroom Research and Assessment

Classroom research is the precursor of classroom assessment. As early as 1986 K. Patricia Cross was recognized as an advocate of classroom research (Angelo, 1991, p. 1). Angelo (1991) suggests that “faculty across the country have been inspired by her vision of a learner-centered, teacher-directed approach aimed at understanding and improving student learning” (p. 1). In the classroom, assessment activities are used to examine learning as a process with clearly defined benchmarks and learning outcomes (Angelo, 1991; Astin et al., 1996; Banta et al., 1996; Evenbeck & Kahn, 2001; Ewell, 1985, 2001). Data are used to intervene and support improved learning and increased student success (Angelo, 1991). To be successful in meeting learner demands, the instructor becomes a partner in the student learning process and is required to use data to make decisions relevant to learner needs and classroom success.

Assessment Beyond the Classroom

Assessment has implications beyond the classroom and is evident at all institutional levels. Williford and Moden (1993) cite C. J. Ping, President of Ohio University, regarding a commitment to enhance quality as a key issue in using the assessment process (p. 40). They claim, “one purpose of student assessment in the planning processes of Ohio University is to assist in improving the performance of programs and individuals” (p. 44). Ratcliff (1992) echoes the value of assessment, linking student learning with effectiveness of educational programs and

resulting in “improved student performance in college” (p. 39). Palomba and Banta (1999) cite two examples of colleges that were engaged in assessment of “individual student learning” as early as 1973: Alverno College and Truman State University (p. 1). The University of Tennessee responded to state level performance funding with “department-level activities, standardized testing, and opinion surveys” (Palomba & Banta, 1999, p. 2). Palomba and Banta (1999) further cite “a diverse mix of campuses and approaches” to assessment, which include community colleges and universities in Florida, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Virginia (p. 2).

Assessment Areas

The division of an institution into curricular areas affords a conventional mapping for effectiveness assessment. Cohen (1983) identifies five potential assessment areas (of which four are addressed in this research): General education, transfer or collegiate, compensatory or remedial [developmental], career or technical education, and community service. Many community colleges view general education as the core of the curriculum. The continuous evaluation of general education is seen as a means of assessing the effectiveness of the general education component of the curriculum. Case (1983) suggests that improvement of general education should be a concern of highest priority because it “is an essential, even indispensable, function of the community college” (p. 100). He suggests that a clear link be made between “goals, learner outcomes, course content, and methods of instruction selected to elicit these outcomes” (p. 109).

Collegiate education is a term used by Cohen (1983) to describe “all courses and programs for which academic degree credit is offered” (p. 175). Astin (1983) links academic credit courses with the transfer process and suggests, “Most of the systematic evidence concerning the effectiveness of the community college in fulfilling its role in the larger society is

derived from studies of the transfer process” (p. 122). More recent references tend to identify courses that apply toward a degree or contribute to transferring to a university or college as transfer courses. This area has traditionally been the mainstay of most comprehensive community colleges since their inception. Assessment of learning has often been secondary to providing necessary curriculum for transfer to a university or college.

Community college faculties have often seen compensatory education, or developmental education, as a necessary evil. Many community colleges have established developmental education programs to meet the needs of low academically skilled students. Community colleges tend to be attractive to large numbers of students with lower skills and from lower socio-economic levels. In many cases the community college is challenged with the responsibility of preparing these students for transfer or degree programs. The importance of these programs is emphasized by Cohen (1983). He suggests that every institution should have a developmental education component (p. 164) and that developmental education “be merged with degree-credit courses” (p. 182). Progress in developmental programs is often tied to general education in such basic skill areas as writing, reading, and math.

Career education or programs offering certificates generally have mandated assessment measures of effectiveness based on state or federally defined competencies. Competencies in this area tend to be based on business and industry needs and workforce skill demands. Therefore, assessment is thought of in terms of skills rather than general education outcomes. While these needs may be important to the community and the mission of the community college, this study focused on these activities only as they relate to the assessment-of-student-learning programs.

Assessment Planning

When linked to institutional effectiveness, assessment becomes a measure of academic strength or weakness. The need for planning is well documented. Banta et al. (1996) suggests that “effective assessment programs become embedded in the institutional culture” and that they should be “an integral part of the overall education mission” (p. 30). Dugan (2006a) indicates that planning begins with educational values and leads to the establishment of student learning goals “that are embedded within the context of the institutional strategic planning process and the development of its institutional mission” (p. 104). The AACC (1997) distinguishes between strategy planning and institutional effectiveness. They suggest, “Strategy planning produces an operational blueprint for a college,” and that “institutional effectiveness relies fundamentally on an outcomes-based assessment of actual achievement as compared to intended results” (p. 27). It is evident that planning for effectiveness incorporates all aspects of an institution and focuses on mission.

Based on the recommendation of Dr. John Roueche, director of the Community College Leadership Program at the University of Texas at Austin, this researcher examined the Midlands Technical College (MTC) assessment plan. The plan is vision-oriented and focuses on assessment. The plan is a how-to workbook based on statements of vision, values, mission, role and scope (AACC, 1997, p. 1); it clearly identifies and promotes broad acceptance of vision and mission before addressing operational tasks (AACC, 1997, p. 13).

Although faculty members play an important role in assessment of student learning (Angelo, 1991; Banta et al., 1996; Palomba & Banta, 1999), the role of an institution's administrator is equally as important, though not as apparent. Ewell (1983) emphasizes the importance of administrators having “both the right and the responsibility to create

accountability structures for themselves, for faculty, and for students as well, to ensure that educational outcomes most nearly approach the institution's goals" (p. 66). He cites Thomas Stauffer (1981), *Quality: Higher Education's Principal Challenge*, Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education, explaining how Stauffer makes clear the charge for administrators to communicate "results of outcome assessments to the public and to those with funding authority" (p. 66). As a result, Ewell (1983) suggests an expectation that administrators be held accountable for such communication to take place (p. 66). Astin et al. (1996) suggest that "assessment's questions can't be fully addressed without participation by student-affairs, educators, librarians, administrators," and that students should be involved when tackling assessment questions. Banta et al. (1996) cites results of a 1990 California study of fifteen pilot assessment projects that show that both "faculty participation and administrative support were important indicators of successful assessment" (p. 36).

Because assessment is a process that contributes to institutional effectiveness, the literature is clear that its implementation must involve all aspects of the institution. The future of community college instructional development is in "the actualization of the human potential of students, faculty, and staff" and in the belief of "the ability of these persons and institutions to grow, change, and improve" (Kanter, 1994, p. 242). In a survey by Vaughan and Weisman (1998), a responding president commented:

To be successful in the future, presidents must understand what will impact the college over the next decade, identify a response strategy, move to implement a plan to achieve the strategic objectives, and work like blazes with as broad a base of colleagues as possible to achieve success (p. 147).

It is important that whatever the level of assessment, the program planners must see the whole.

Improvement of Student Learning

Within the last two decades, assessment practice became focused on improvement of student learning and increasing student skills (Angelo, 1991; Banta et al., 1996; Beno, 2004; Ewell, 1985; Loaker & Mentkowski, 1993; Spangehl, 1994). Angelo (1991) claims that improving learning was the primary purpose of classroom assessment and that it provides teachers with the “kind of feedback they need to inform their instructional decisions” (p. 9). He suggests that faculty with classroom assessment experience should “note increased student participation and active learning in class as well as increased faculty-student interactions” (p. 15). As a result of teachers’ use of classroom assessment, these faculties “mention a heightening of their own intellectual interest in teaching and learning” (p. 15).

From a broader perspective Ewell (1985) indicates that the results of assessment “can help to focus institutional attention on its most critical activities, teaching and learning” (p. 2). Seybert (2004) indicates that “the primary emphasis in assessment is on the improvement of teaching, learning, and services to students” (p. 9). This perspective implies that assessment-of-learning programs promote improvement of teaching and learning across all disciplines and at all instructional levels: classroom, programmatic, and departmental (Banta et al., 1996; Cress, 1996; Ewell, 1985; Williford & Moden, 1993). Astin et al. (1996) argues that assessment is a vehicle for “educational improvement” and that “student learning begins with educational values.” To attain efficacy, practice must begin with “a vision of the kinds of learning we most value for students and strive to help them achieve.” Banta et al. (1996) suggests that for assessment to lead to improvements it “must reflect what people are passionate about, committed to, and value” (p. 5). Cress (1996) posits that, along with improvements in instructional programs, assessment

should improve support programs, “thereby increasing the prospects of individual student success” (§ 4).

Accrediting Agencies

In 1988 Secretary of Education William Bennett demanded accrediting agencies to include “demonstrated educational achievement as assessed and documented through appropriate measures” (Banta, 2001, p. 9). Dugan (2006b) suggests that “society demands ‘product guarantees,’ and higher education accreditation processes in the United States provide a stamp of approval” (p. 48). Much of the attention given to the assessment-of-learning outcomes in the last decade has come from regional and disciplinary accrediting associations (Ewell, 2001; Banta, 2001; Serban 2004). Ewell (2001) indicates that it is “imperative” for accrediting agencies to take on this responsibility (p. 24). Now, the remaining regional accrediting agencies recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) include assessment criteria as a requirement for accreditation. Many accrediting agencies have recently “altered their standards and evaluation processes to increase the emphasis on student learning” (Beno, 2004, p. 66). A concise explanation of the specific requirements made by each accrediting agency follows the detailed accounting of the CHEA.

Council for Higher Education Accreditation

The Council for Higher Education Accreditation describes itself as “a national advocate and institutional voice for self-regulation of academic quality through accreditation” in the United States. More than 60 institutional and programmatic accrediting organizations represent approximately 3,000 colleges and universities (CHEA, 2006, CHEA At-A-Glance). CHEA is the “primary national voice for voluntary accreditation to the general public, opinion leaders,

students and families,” and serves also as “a representative of U.S. accreditation community to international audiences” (CHEA, 2006, CHEA Purposes).

An accrediting organization that is recognized by CHEA is deemed to have met a series of standards that includes demonstration of accountability. CHEA is the only nongovernmental higher education organization that undertakes this scrutiny. Accrediting agencies have standards that call for institutions and programs to provide consistent, reliable information about academic quality and student achievement to foster continuing public confidence and investment (CHEA, 2006, Recognition).

Regional Agencies

According to O'Banion (1997), the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) was one of the earliest to link the assessment process to learning outcomes (p. 93). The remaining regional agencies followed with similar requirements as illustrated in Table 1. The year the agencies included assessment-of-learning language in their criteria and their reference to assessment is included.

Table 1:

Year of Assessment Policy and Assessment Reference for Regional Agencies

Regional Association	Year of Initial Policy	Assessment-of-learning requirement of institution
Southern	1984	Calls for the "analysis of the effectiveness of the learning environment supporting student learning..." (SACS, 2004).
Middle States	1985	Assesses "both institutional effectiveness and student learning outcomes and uses the results for improvement" (MSCHE, 2006, p. iv).
Western	1988	Calls for the "development and review...of assessment of learning" (WASC, 2004, p. 9).
North Central	1989	Provides "evidence of student learning and teaching effectiveness that demonstrates it is fulfilling its educational mission" (HLC, 2003, p. 117).
New England	1992	States "The institution implements and supports a systematic and broad-based approach to the assessment of student learning" (NEASC, 2005, p. 12).
Northwest	1994	States that "degree and certificate programs...are characterized by ... the assessment-of-learning outcomes" (NCCU, 2005).

Table adopted from Peterson & Augustine (2000, p. 449)

The Higher Learning Commission (the population for this study) links assessment directly to what students learn. Lopez (2006) suggests that the Higher Learning Commission “remains committed first and foremost to the continuous improvement of student learning” (p. 68). O’Banion (1997) indicates that The Higher Learning Commission has developed “a conceptual framework that insists on assessing what students learn as a direct outcome of their educational programs and experiences” (p. 94). The Higher Learning Commission’s (2003) Criterion Three indicates that an institution provide “evidence of student learning and teaching effectiveness that demonstrates it is fulfilling its educational mission” (p. 48). O’Banion (1997) indicates that this has not been at the expense of other important outcome and productivity measures, such as degree completion rates, transfer rates, and job placement rates. He suggests that the recent shift to assessment of student learning has become the “principal means by which to demonstrate overall institutional effectiveness” (p. 94).

Although assessment-of-student learning is required by all of the aforementioned accrediting agencies and is of interest globally (Banta, 1994, p. 400), this study addressed only the Higher Learning Commission’s region. Nineteen states in the commission’s region (HLC, 2007) had 174 accredited “Community Colleges.” Each, by virtue of meeting accreditation criteria, must have an approved program to assess student learning. Astin et al. (1996) recognize that “assessment is not an end in itself but a vehicle for educational improvement” (§ 1). As such, assessment-of-learning programs have become the process by which student learning is measured.

Successful Programs

Having reviewed literature for the assessment environment in general, the researcher sought to further explore the specific areas intended for this study. Hence, the following section

is devoted to what literature has to say about Successful Programs and secondly about those areas explored in this study: Institutional Dynamics: Type of Institution and AQIP or PEAQ Institutions; Administrative Qualities and Characteristics: Chief Executive and Chief Academic Officer Tenure and Decision-Making Style (Top-Down/Bottom-Up); and Assessment-of-Learning Program Support: Mission Emphasis and Monetary Support for Assessment-of-Learning Programs.

Characteristics of successful programs range considerably, although Banta et al. (1996) suggest that “institutions with long histories of successful assessment programs ... all credit the importance of wide constituency participation for much of their success” and that “widespread involvement in assessment is a crucial factor” in successful assessment programs (p. 36). Other factors important to successful assessment programs are “planning, preparation, and the presence of a receptive institutional culture for assessment” (Banta et al., 1996, p. 36). Banta, Black, Kahn, and Jackson (2004) agree that institutional culture must have “deeply embedded” assessment programs that “are built on a foundation of sustained, committed leadership; an understanding that effective assessment is essential to learning; and a sense that the responsibility for learning and assessment is shared by everyone at the institution” (p. 10).

Literature reveals a number of attempts to establish principles or characteristics of successful assessment-of-learning programs. In an effort to identify characteristics of successful programs Huba and Freed (2000) examined the 9 Principles of Good Practice for Assessing Student Learning, found in Appendix B, developed by the AAHE Assessment Forum (Astin et al., 1996) and “Hallmarks of Successful Programs to Assess Student Academic Achievement included in the 1994-1996 *Handbook of Accreditation* on the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the North Central Association” (p. 67) found in Appendix C. From these

principles and hallmarks, Huba and Freed (2000) derived key questions to establish or evaluate an assessment-of-learning program (Appendix D). Banta, Black, Kahn, and Jackson (2004) cite Banta, Lund, Black, and Oblander (1996) as illustrating and expanding this list. “In 2002, Banta drew on these and other statements to develop a more detailed set of principles, characterizing good practice in three phases of assessment: planning, implementing, and improving and sustaining” (7).

Suskie (2006a) compiled a list of five dimensions of good assessment (Appendix E) derived from various agencies and institutions, including Huba and Freed’s key questions and the AAHE nine principles. The inclusion of both Huba and Freed’s key questions and the AAHE nine principles creates some redundancy, as Huba and Freed included the AAHE nine principles in developing their questions. The Higher Learning Commission’s *Hallmarks of Successful Programs to Assess Student Academic Achievement* are not assimilated into Suskie’s five general principles; as a result this researcher has chosen the Huba and Freed’s framework as the basis of developing an instrument to measure successful assessment-of-learning programs (Appendix F). Huba and Freed’s includes Higher Learning Commission Hallmarks, which is applicable to the population of institutions included in this study, and is much more manageable.

Institutional Dynamics

In a study of influences on institutional approaches to student assessment in higher education, Peterson and Augustine (2000) found that “institutional dynamics and accreditation region” were “primary influences on student assessment approaches” in research, doctoral, master’s, baccalaureate, and associate of arts institutions (443). Further “...internal dynamics appear to be the driving force of all three approaches to student assessment” (p. 443). Although institutional dynamics may influence student assessment approaches, the question remains: Do

institutional dynamics, when viewed as characteristic behaviors of an administration, influence the success of an assessment-of-learning program? This question is explored in this study.

Type of Institution

Peterson cites Ewell indicating that “institutional type also affects its approach to assessment, both directly and indirectly, through its influence on institutional dynamics (Ewell, 1988)” (Peterson & Augustine, 2000, p. 451). The effect of the type of institution may impact leadership, an important element in promoting assessment of learning as Bragg (2004) suggests, “community college students become community and college leaders, especially in rural areas.” Differentiation between rural and urban community colleges was explored in this research.

AQIP or PEAQ Institutions

As a result of rapid change in colleges and universities, the Higher Learning Commission has been challenged to respond with accreditation programs that address college and universities’ needs while maintaining a “capacity to provide credible quality assurance” (HLC, 2007, p. 7). In 1999 The Higher Learning Commission introduced a program for maintaining accredited status based on the principles of continuous quality improvement. This effort was supported by a grant from the Pew Charitable Trust and resulted in an alternative process by which institutions are accredited. Through a cycle of simultaneous events, actions, updates, and strategies—an institution “demonstrates it meets accreditation standards and expectations through sequences of events that align with those ongoing activities that characterize organizations striving to improve their performance” (AQIP, n.d., Home Page, ¶ 1). The program was aptly named Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP). In January 2007, seventy-five community colleges were listed as AQIP (n.d.) institutions in the on-line “Participating Institution List.”

The Higher Learning Commission (2003) gave a new identity to the traditional approach of maintaining accredited status resulting in the Program to Evaluate and Advance Quality (PEAQ). The PEAQ approach “employs a five-step comprehensive evaluation process to determine continued accredited status” (HLC, 2003, p.2.2-1). Ninety-nine community colleges were listed as PEAQ (HLC, 2007) institutions in the January 2007, on-line “Participating Institutions List.” This program along with the new AQIP program is designed to help “create an environment of self-regulation, to honor the distinctiveness of each affiliated organization, and to assure that the public is well-served by the organizations the Commission accredits” (HLC, 2003, p. v).

Administrative Qualities and Characteristics

Chief Executive and Chief Academic Officer Tenure

Literature is clear on the need for administrative support in implementing a successful assessment-of-learning program. In *A Learning College for the 21st Century*, O’Banion (1997) places responsibility for a “new learning mission” on the CEO and the CAO. He suggests they “must be especially visible and persistent supporters of the new learning mission of the college” (p. 206). Changes in leadership often bring new priorities and emphases, and sometimes these greatly influence already implemented assessment-of-learning programs (Miller, 1988).

Successful assessment must be supported by effective leadership (Banta et al., 1996; HLC, 2003). Banta et al. (1996) suggest that successful programs have “administrative commitment, adequate resources, ... faculty and staff development opportunities, and time” (p. 62). Further, Woldt’s (2004) study suggests that the “use of outcomes assessment results in institutional decision-making” (p. 1), an important component of administrative leadership. Woldt sent surveys to 302 Chief Academic Officers at public two-year institutions in the Higher

Learning Commission region of which 216 responses were returned. Seventy-nine percent of the respondents were CAOs. Eighty-four percent of the respondents rated “upper administrator’s” leadership as effective in relationship to “overall effectiveness ... in institution-wide assessment activities” (p. 5). In this same study respondents indicated that “upper administrators set a positive tone for the institution regarding assessment activities,” and “wholeheartedly endorse and support the assessment process” (p. 5). Miller (1988) comments on the tenure of college administrators:

The average institutional tenure for Chief Executive Officers, Chief Academic Officers (CAOs) and college deans is about five years. Therefore, the multiyear span of most assessment programs probably will intersect with several changes in key administrative personnel. Changes in leadership often bring new priorities and emphases, and sometimes these significantly affect assessment programs that are already under way.

Although administrative support is clearly needed and wanted in successful assessment programs, administrative tenure may limit the ability of some programs to achieve such success. As noted above, Miller (1988) recognized that tenure for Chief Executive and Academic Officers was about five years. Effective assessment programs may require much more time to reach the level of success necessary to demonstrate learning improvement.

Decision-Making Style: Top-Down/Bottom-Up

Literature is unclear relative to the relationship of different types of decision-making styles to successful assessment-of-learning programs. Regarding top-down decision making, Miller (1988) has this to say:

. . . one is rarely wrong to state that persistent support by the CAO is also very important to the success of most academic innovations. This support includes spending money,

overcoming constraints, making choices among alternatives on policy matters and important procedural matters, and initiating and institutionalizing academic changes . . . top-down [decision making] tendencies rely more on vigorous support from the Chief Executive Officer and the Chief Academic Officer, without which the assessment innovation very likely would flounder and fail.

Although Miller (1988) suggests that top-down support of the assessment process by the CEO and CAO is important to the success of academic assessment “innovations;” there is little evidence that it is more effective than a bottom-up approach. Miller further suggests that among the “success-prone factors” for assessment projects is a “Chief Executive Officer and a Chief Academic Officer who are fully committed to the project” (p.12). Dwyer (2006) indicates that “successful assessment programs... point to a model of change that taps the resources and talents of the group” (p. 165). She believes it is important to develop a process that incorporates grassroots education and broad-based participation to create a common understanding and purpose” (p. 179).

Assessment-of-Learning Program Support

Mission Emphasis

Literature supports the link of assessment to institutional mission whether assessing strategy, programs, or learning. As cited earlier, Banta et al. (1996) suggests that embedded assessment programs should be integral to the “overall education mission” (p. 30) and Seybert (2004) suggests that “assessment is essentially an examination of the degree to which the institution is in fact adhering in practice to the principles of its mission statement” (p. 8). Dugan and Hernon (2006) link outcome assessment with mission, stating that it focuses “on student learning as expressed in the institution’s mission and it asks academe to adopt accountability as

‘an institutional value’” (p. 1). Effective assessment must begin with clear goals (Angelo & Cross, 1993, p. 8) and “originate from the institutional mission statement...” (Dugan and Hernon, 2006, p. 5). Angelo and Cross (1993) suggest that, despite institutions’ focus on effectiveness based goals and mission, college teachers still “tend to define their instructional goals in terms of course content” (p. 8). Banta et al. (1996) concurs, commenting that institutional mission statements “too often ... fail to say much about students or student learning” (p. 4). Kanter (1994) indicates it is important for faculty to own “the instructional goals of the college” (p. 221). It is equally important for them to understand the tie to the college’s mission. Faculty and administration both share in the development of mission and the plan for effectiveness assessment. It is incumbent upon administration to have clear direction for the institution. Kanter (1994) suggests that “administration must have a strong sense of clearly defined mission and a comprehensive strategic plan if it is to manage the instructional programs at the institution effectively” (p. 242). Vaughan and Weisman (1998) remind us of the importance of maintaining close contact between faculty and administration in identifying mission “Perhaps nothing presidents do is more important than consistently and effectively communicating the mission to the college’s numerous constituents” (p. 82). An assertion of the significance of student learning to institutional mission was inferred in 1991 by the president of Palomar College who wrote: “We are no longer content with merely providing quality instruction. We will judge ourselves henceforth on the quality of student learning we produce” (Boggs & Michael, 1997, p. 193).

College mission, which follows vision, is important to setting the course, not only for the institution to identify what it is all about, but to define clearly its responsibility to a learning community. Accountability assumes a responsibility for the accomplishment of mission and

goals. Boggs and Michael (1997) suggest that the mission statement of the future must clearly communicate that “the college exists to promote and support learning” and that it “take responsibility for the success of its students” (p. 207).

Conjoining mission and institutional effectiveness demands a research-oriented approach to assessment. Knowing the mission and measuring its accomplishment is at the core of institutional effectiveness. Palmer (1994) indicates that educational purposes need to be tied to data collection and institutional research (p. 471). Assessment of learning is a part of the institutional mission, as it becomes a source of data for meeting accountability demands.

Accountability measures flow from the college’s mission. Traditionally, departments have maintained an autonomy that may or may not reflect the mission of the institution, whether that mission is comprehensive, technical, transfer oriented, or some other combination. Mission is tied to performance, no matter the institutional level. O’Banion (1997) suggests that mission and vision statements were important for Palomar College to establish itself as a “learning college” (p. 193), a concept that makes “learning the central focus for all activity” (p. 39)

In Peterson and Augustine’s (2000) study of External and Internal Influences on Institutional Approaches to Student Assessment, community colleges were neither less nor more likely to “stress assessment in their mission statements” (p. 457). Yet, repeatedly, assessment researchers insist that assessment must be tied to mission and that institutions must be accountable based on that mission (AACC, 1997; MSCHE, 2002; Boggs & Michael, 1997). The study focused on 885 public institutions under the influence of “state requirements for student assessment” (p. 444), of which 509 were identified as Associate of Arts institutions. The response rate for Associate of Arts institutions was 53%. The study suggests that there is a positive relationship between “mission statement emphasis on, administrative and governance

activities for, and administrative and faculty support for student assessment” and the “three types of student assessment approaches” (p. 459). The three types of student assessment approaches in the study were cognitive assessment, affective assessment, and post-college assessment (p. 459). Mission statement emphasis, in the study, is defined in the “Operational Definitions of Variables” table as emphasizing “excellence in undergraduate education,” identifying “educational outcomes intended for students,” and referring to “student assessment as [an] important activity” (p. 454).

Literature unquestionably supports the link of student learning to mission and to educational quality (Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions, n.d.; HLC, 2003). The Council of Regional Accrediting Agencies (n.d.) criteria for evaluation of student learning asked the question: “To what extent are mission, goal, and objectives focused on student learning and institutional improvement” (p. 28)? The degree to which an institution’s assessment program is “marked by a strong, readily-identifiable relationship between overall institutional mission and objectives and the specific educational objectives of individual departments or programs” is another question asked by the Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions (n.d., p. 29). The American Association of Community Colleges (1997) suggests that strategic planning “prepares for future action, focusing on the relationship of the college to its environment and its constituents” (p. 1). One could question whether formalized assessment is less likely to be successful if learning is not a part of the mission statement and consequently not an achievement strategy.

Monetary Support for Assessment-of-Learning Programs

Literature suggests that spending money on assessment of learning is important to the success of assessment programs (Banta et al., 1996; Miller, 1988; Council of Regional

Accrediting Commissions, n.d.). Banta et al. (1996) suggests that money and clerical support is needed in addition to support for faculty and staff development, which requires a reasonable level of funding as well. Serban (2004) notes that “discretionary money to fund assessment efforts is scarce” (p. 25). In the Woldt (2004) study, over 52% of community colleges in the Higher Learning Commission region budgeted less than \$20,000 for assessment (p. 6). On a four-point scale of “more than adequate” to “severely inadequate,” thirty-nine percent of the respondents rated the “adequacy of the use of assessment results in the budgeting process” as “adequate” or “more than adequate” (p. 6). The remainder indicated that use in the budgeting process was at the inadequate levels. The Woldt (2004) study is unclear as to the effectiveness of this level of expenditure relative to the percentage of the general operating budget.

Summary

Literature supports the necessity of having assessment programs as a means of improving effectiveness, improving quality of student learning, and meeting accountability demands of stakeholders. Administration and faculty backing of a clear mission is necessary to achieve a successful assessment-of-learning program. Since *A Nation at Risk* was reported in 1983, an assessment environment has been established as a part of the larger assessment of the culture of institutional effectiveness. Assessment areas identified in the literature include general education, transfer programs, career education, and developmental education. This study focuses on successful assessment-of-learning programs in community colleges in the Higher Learning Commission region. As a result of the comprehensive nature of community colleges, assessment of learning tends to cross all assessment areas.

Assessment planning is essential to driving successful assessment-of-learning programs in the community college and is critical in demonstrating accountability to state and regional

accrediting agencies. Assessment of learning is necessary to maintaining high standards in community colleges. Factors important to the success of assessment-of-learning programs range from widespread involvement by stakeholders to the presence of an institutional culture. Seeking an appropriate survey instrument, this researcher consulted with accrediting personnel at the regional level and also relied on literature review for selection of the questions that would best contribute to this study. Therefore, Huba and Freed's (2000) key questions, derived from the AAHE Assessment Forum and North Central Association, were used as the framework in developing the survey instrument used in this study. When this researcher contacted Huba seeking information about the use of these statements as a tool to evaluate assessment programs, she was unaware of any application of the questions for such a purpose. This study, then, may provide future researchers in these assessment areas with a tested instrument.

Three groups of independent variables were derived from the literature and experience of the researcher for this study: Institutional Dynamics, Administrative Qualities and Characteristics, and Assessment-of-Learning Program Support. Institutional Dynamics is comprised of the type of institution (rural or urban) and whether an institution is designated as an AQIP or PEAQ institution. The introduction of AQIP as an alternative process by which institutions are accredited challenges organizations to continually improve performance. Improvement is a hallmark of assessment of learning.

The second group of independent variables, administrative qualities and characteristics, include CEO and CAO tenure and decision-making style. Literature makes clear the need for administrative support in implementing a successful assessment-of-learning program, particularly from the CEO and the CAO. However, the visibility and persistent support of the CEO and CAO in promoting a learning mission are critical. Also, the effect of key administrative

personnel change (tenure) often brings new priorities and emphases that may significantly affect assessment programs (Miller, 1988).

Assessment-of-learning program support, the third group of this study's independent variables, includes mission emphasis and resources. Support of assessment-of-learning programs generally flows from mission documents and fiscal commitment. Performance is tied to mission no matter the institutional level. As a result, assessment must be tied to mission and the institution must be accountable based on that mission. Literature is clear that the link of student learning to mission is a link to educational quality. Spending money on assessment of learning is important to the success of assessment programs. Woldt (2004) found that over 53% of community colleges in the Higher Learning Commission region budgeted \$20,000 or less for assessment (p. 6). However, the effectiveness of this level of expenditure is not clear without knowing the proportion of the general budget and the effectiveness of the program relative to money spent.

This study examined the differences between the perceived success of community college assessment-of-learning programs and institutional dynamics, administrative qualities and characteristics, and assessment-of-learning program support of community colleges in the Higher Learning Commission region as measured by a quantitative survey of participating CAOs and qualitative interviews with selected CAOs from those institutions. Common dynamics, qualities and characteristics, and program support are identified that may promote more consistency in the assessment-of-student-learning programs at the community college level.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology used to study the differences between the perceived success of community college assessment programs and institutional dynamics, administrative qualities and characteristics, and assessment-of-learning program support of community colleges in the Higher Learning Commission region. Topics covered are Problem and Purpose, Research Questions, Null Hypotheses, Research Design, Dependent Variable, Independent Variables, Instrumentation, Sample/Population, Procedures for Data Collection, Data Analysis, and Summary.

Problem and Purpose

Identifying assessment-of-learning programs that successfully reflect the Higher Learning Commission's expectations for accreditation and assessment-of-learning processes may be helpful in replicating that success. Assessment-of-learning program success is inconsistent among community colleges across the country. This may be attributed to changing institutional definitions of assessment as a result of institutional dynamics, administrative qualities and characteristics, and support for assessment-of-learning programs. Determining the influence of these factors toward perceived successful assessment programs may offer administrators and planning teams one more tool toward success at their own institutions.

This study examined institutional dynamics, administrative qualities and characteristics, and program support in order to understand better how these factors affect perceived successful assessment-of-learning programs in community colleges in the Higher Learning Commission region. This was done using an on-line survey developed by the researcher and qualitative

interviews. The instrument, Assessment-of-Student-Learning Program Success (ASLPS) survey, is derived from Huba and Freed's (2000) "Key Questions to Consider When Establishing or Evaluating an Assessment Program" (pp. 68-85). The perceived level of success of responding institutions was measured based on the composite score of each CAO's responses on the ASLPS survey at each institution. The survey was designed to provide quantitative responses to the first seven questions in the following section. Telephone interviews with selected CAOs provided qualitative data used to address research question number eight.

Research Questions

This study examined the following questions:

1. Is there a difference between the perceived level of success of community college assessment programs and the type (urban/rural) of institution? If so, what is the nature of that difference?
2. Is there a difference between the perceived level of success of community college assessment programs and the accreditation method (AQIP or PEAQ) of the institution? If so, what is the nature of that difference?
3. Is there a difference between the perceived level of success of community college assessment-of-learning programs and an institution's CEO's tenure? If so, what is the nature of that difference?
4. Is there a difference between the perceived level of success of community college assessment-of-learning programs and an institution's CAO's tenure? If so, what is the nature of that difference?
5. Is there a difference between the perceived level of success of community college assessment-of-learning programs and an institution's decision-making practice (top-down/bottom-up). If so, what is the nature of that difference?

6. Is there a difference between the perceived level of success of community college assessment-of-learning programs and an institution's mission emphasis? If so, what is the nature of that difference?
7. Is there a difference between the perceived level of success of community college assessment-of-learning programs and the percentage of general fund money spent on assessment of learning? If so, what is the nature of that difference?
8. What administrative or institutional constructs or phenomena are consistent among institutions with perceived successful assessment-of-learning programs and how do they contribute to program success, as measured by qualitative interviews of selected institutions?

Null Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested in this study:

- H₀₁ There is no significant difference in perceived levels of success of assessment-of-learning programs that are urban and rural.
- H₀₂ There is no significant difference in perceived levels of success of assessment-of-learning programs between AQIP and PEAQ institutions.
- H₀₃ There is no significant difference in perceived levels of success of assessment-of-learning programs when examined by the length of tenure of the CEO.
- H₀₄ There is no significant difference in perceived levels of success of assessment-of-learning programs when examined by the length of tenure of the CAO.
- H₀₅ There is no significant difference in perceived levels of success of assessment-of-learning programs between institutions with top-down decision making and bottom-up decision making.

H₀₆ There is no significant difference in perceived levels of success of assessment-of-learning programs between institutions that include or exclude assessment-of-learning language in their mission statement.

H₀₇ There is no significant difference in perceived levels of success of assessment-of-learning programs of institutions based on the percentage of general fund money spent on assessment of learning in fiscal year 2006.

Research Design

This study used the mixed method design. Quantitative methods were used to answer research questions one through seven. Answers to these questions were then used to select institutions for further study. Research question eight provided qualitative responses about institutional dynamics, administrative qualities and characteristics, and assessment-of-learning program support among institutions with perceived successful and unsuccessful assessment-of-learning programs as determined by scores on the ASLPS survey.

Quantitative Study

Quantitative means were used to test the seven null hypotheses and to purposively select ten institutions for the qualitative portion of this study. According to Krathwohl (1998), purposive sampling is used to “better inform the researcher regarding the current focus of the investigation” (p. 172).

Qualitative Study

Maxwell (1996) suggests that hypotheses in qualitative research “are generally formulated *after* the researcher has begun the study; they are grounded in data and are developed and tested in interaction with it, rather than being prior ideas that are simply tested against data”

(p. 53). With this in mind, the researcher drew from information in the quantitative portion of the study to conduct qualitative research on the ten purposively selected institutions.

To better understand the differences of institutional dynamics, administrative qualities and characteristics, and assessment-of-learning program support to perceived successful assessment programs, the researcher interviewed ten CAOs representing the institutions with the five highest and five lowest scores on the ASLPS survey. Themes derived from interview data were identified and coded by the researcher and one other reader. These themes were used to describe the differences of institutional dynamics, administrative qualities and characteristics, and assessment program support to perceived successful assessment-of-learning programs as measured by the ASLPS survey.

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable for this study was the composite score on the ASLPS survey which was designed by the researcher and based on Huba and Freed's (2000) "Key Questions to Consider when Establishing and Evaluating an Assessment Program" (pp. 68 –85).

Independent Variables

The independent variables (Appendix G) for this study were type of institution, accreditation method, CEO tenure, CAO tenure, top-down/bottom-up decision making, mission language and emphasis, and percent of the budget allocated to assessment-of-learning activities.

Instrumentation

Quantitative Instrument

The ASLPS survey instrument (Appendix A) was used to test the seven null hypotheses stated earlier in this study. The ASLPS survey contains 24 items in two parts. Part I, Institutional Dynamics and Administrative Characteristics, is comprised of eight elements designed to gather

data about the institution and its administration. Part II, Assessment-of-Learning Program Evaluation, is comprised of 17 statements, developed from Huba and Freed's (2000) "Key Questions to Consider When Establishing or Evaluating an Assessment Program," to which the respondents indicated their level of agreement or disagreement on a five-point Likert scale. The 17 statements contributed to the composite score that determined the level of perceived success of the assessment-of-learning programs.

The ASLPS survey instrument was available on-line to allow a larger number of institutions to take part in this study, provide quicker feedback, and reduce costs to the researcher. Huba and Freed (2000) grouped their questions into 13 sets (pp. 68-85). In some cases a set was one question and other sets were comprised of two questions. Each set was rewritten by the researcher to form statements used on the ASLPS survey instrument. In cases where more than one question or multiple topics were in a set, the questions became separate statements for the survey instrument. As an example, in Huba and Freed's (2000) second set of questions (p. 69) two questions comprised the set:

Is assessment part of a larger set of conditions that promote change at the institution?

Does it provide feedback to students and the institution?

In this situation the researcher has taken each question and made it a separate item on the survey.

Using the above as an example, the following statements resulted:

Assessment is part of a larger set of conditions that promote change at the institution.

Assessment provides feedback to students and the institution.

Literature suggests that Web surveys provide high response rates and are more effective than mail surveys. Dillman (2000) suggests that "university professors, federal government employees, workers in many companies and corporations, and members of some professional

organizations” are populations that have “Internet addresses and access” (p. 356). Further, he suggests that for such populations, “e-mail and Web surveys may have only minor coverage problems” (p. 356). The American Association of Community Colleges (2005) suggests that “more than 95 percent of community colleges are Internet connected” (§ 1). Kiernan, Kiernan, Oyler, and Giles (2005) conducted an experimental study of 274 “community- and university-based educators” to determine if Web surveys are as effective as mail surveys. Randomly selected program participants were assigned either a Web or mail survey. Surveys were compared “on three key measures of survey effectiveness: response rate, question completion, and the lack of evaluative bias” (p. 246). Their study revealed that “Web survey participants were more likely to respond (95%) than mail survey participants (79%)” (p. 245). Additionally, Web survey respondents “were not more likely to be different types of educators than mail survey participants” (p. 249), and “were less likely to view the program more positively or negatively than mail survey participants” (p. 250). The study also found that a “Web survey appears to be as effective as a mail survey in the completion of quantitative questions that measure knowledge, attitudes, behaviors and intentions.”

Dillman also suggests that there are four sources of survey error, which “form the cornerstones for conducting a quality survey...” (p. 9): Sampling Error, Coverage Error, Measurement Error, and Non-response Error. In an effort to reduce sampling error, this study provided an opportunity for all institutions in the study population, excluding those surveyed in the pilot study, to respond to the survey. This included all two-year institutions in the Higher Learning Commission’s region with the words “Community College” in their name. According to Dillman (2000), coverage error results from “not allowing all members of the survey population to have an equal or known nonzero chance of being sampled” (p. 11). Because the

study addressed assessment programs of Higher Learning Commission institutions and all institutions had an opportunity to respond, coverage error was eliminated. On-line survey items were only allowed a predetermined response, avoiding inaccurate or uninterruptible responses, thus reducing measurement error. In an effort to reduce non-response error, a letter (Appendix H) was sent to each CAO of community colleges in the Higher Learning Commission region, announcing the study and the pending receipt of an e-mail with the embedded ASLPS survey link. After the e-mail (Appendix I) that included the embedded link was transmitted, a letter was sent to non-respondents (Appendix J). A technical transmission error was detected after the second e-mail was released. This was corrected and additional follow-up e-mails were sent to reduce potential non-response. Some CAOs received up to four e-mails with the ASLPS survey link.

The on-line version of the survey instrument was designed using Dillman's suggestions regarding appearance and question format. The effects of simple versus advanced construction techniques on completion rates and other aspects of completion were tested by Dillman (2000, p. 374). He found that 93% of the respondents that "logged on to the plain version [of the questionnaire] eventually completed all of it," while only 82% finished a fancy version. Care was given to the construction of the instrument, heeding Dillman's (2000) warning that "no single question is more crucial than the first one" (p. 92). He suggested that the first question "should clearly *apply to everyone...be easy*" and "*be interesting*" (p. 92). With this in mind, the first questions requested simple demographic data and lengths of administrative tenure.

Dillman's (2000) four stages of pretesting a questionnaire served as a guide for pretesting the survey instrument. These stages are: Provide a "review by knowledgeable colleagues and analysts, conduct interviews to evaluate cognitive and motivational qualities, conduct a small

pilot study, and perform a final check with people unrelated to the development of the questionnaire” (pp. 140-147). Two quantitative instruments designed by the researcher were reviewed by a panel of three colleagues, comprised of a community college information technology manager, a community college computer technology instructor, and an attorney. After their review of the instrument, interviews were conducted with each reviewer. As a result, the appearance and language of the instrument were modified, increasing respondent understanding and interest in the on-line instrument. The resulting quantitative instrument was pretested in a study on a purposive sample of five institutions, representing different types and perceived levels of assessment-of-learning program success. Because of the uniqueness of the Higher Learning Commission’s approach to accreditation and the focus on accreditation affiliation as an independent variable, the pilot sample was drawn from the Higher Learning Commission’s region, which is the study population. CAOs reviewed the survey instrument as suggested by Dillman. Each CAO was interviewed providing an evaluation of the cognitive and motivational qualities of the instrument. Each CAO was uninvolved with the development of the instruments.

Qualitative Instrument

The researcher developed interview protocol (Appendix K) was used for the qualitative portion of the study. Protocol was based on the guiding questions for this research. Questions were designed to explore further the differences in institutional dynamics, administrative qualities and characteristics, and assessment-of-learning program support to perceived levels of success of assessment-of-learning programs and to identify commonalities contributing to perceived program success. The instrument was pretested in the pilot study on two purposively sampled CAOs selected from the ASLPS survey based on high and low composite scores. As

with the quantitative instrument, each was interviewed to evaluate the cognitive and motivational qualities of the instrument. Each CAO was uninvolved with the development of the questionnaire or in the survey data reported.

Sample/Population

This research included all 174 institutions, with “community college” in their name, that were accredited by the Higher Learning Commission (Appendix L). Institutions were selected from the Higher Learning Commission's on-line directory (HLC, 2007). The sample and population for the quantitative study were the same except for those institutions used in the pilot study.

The qualitative study used a purposively selected sample. Neither a large number of participants nor random sampling was necessary for this type of research (Creswell, 2003). In an effort to explore differences in program levels and better understand what common dynamics, qualities, characteristics, and support are associated with perceived successful programs, ten Higher Learning Commission community colleges (the five highest and five lowest composite scores) were selected for CAO interviews. These institution's CAOs were examined relative to their responses to questions designed to explore their perception of the dynamics, qualities and characteristics, and program support associated with their assessment-of-learning programs. Institutions chosen for the qualitative portion of this study were purposively selected as a result of the analysis of data from the quantitative section. These interviews provided the best information from people who were close to the problem (Maxwell, 1996; Creswell, 2003). Interviews were conducted with the Chief Academic Officer from the selected institutions.

Procedures for Data Collection

Pilot Study

A pilot study was done in advance. The survey process and survey instruments were piloted with five institutions from the Higher Learning Commission region. CAOs uninvolved with the development of the process and survey instruments—and known by the researcher—were used in the pilot study. Institutions used in the pilot study were not a part of the study's population. The pilot study followed the process established for the study.

The three-member panel, previously mentioned, reviewed a pre-pilot quantitative survey instrument by e-mail. Each reviewed two instruments with different appearances and screen options (continuous scrolled or separate page). Language and terminology were revised after input from the reviewers, who preferred a continuous scroll screen. Further refinement resulted in dropdown selections for demographic data and button responses for the quantitative instrument.

Five community colleges in the Higher Learning Commission region were selected for the pilot study (Table 2). Community colleges that participated in the initial survey ranged in size from less than 1,000 full-time headcount to an institution with more than 6,500 full-time

Table 2:
Pilot-Institution Type Mix

Type of College	State	Location	Size	Prior Knowledge of Assessment Program
Community College	KS	Urban	Large	Successful
Community College	KS	Rural	Small	Unsuccessful
Community College	MO	Rural	Medium	Unknown
Community College	IL	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
Technical College	AK	Rural	Medium	Unknown

headcount. The study population represented institutions from urban as well as rural settings.

Pilot Quantitative Survey

A letter was sent to each of the five institutions' CAOs introducing the study, explaining the research and indicating that they would receive an e-mail with the survey link. Within two weeks the e-mail was sent to each CAO with the link for the on-line survey. One institution was not included in the pilot study, resulting in four respondents in the pilot group. After completing the survey, an e-mail was sent to the respondents requesting an interview for the purpose of reviewing the introductory letter, the on-line survey, and the process. A follow-up telephone interview was held with each. Generally, reactions to the e-mail that contained the survey link were positive, and a preference was expressed for questions that contained range answers rather than questions that solicited specific values. The survey instrument was rated "very easy" to use by all respondents. Although no changes were made in the letters, survey, or procedures as a result of the pilot study, the researcher chose to split one item on the quantitative survey instrument into two questions for the formal study.

Data from the four respondents to the ASLPS survey were evaluated and used to select two institutions for qualitative interviews. Upon completion of the on-line survey, a follow-up telephone interview was conducted with each of the four respondents. Answers to telephone survey questions regarding responses to letters and the survey instrument were recorded and transcribed.

The on-line pilot survey was comprised of 7 demographic and 17 assessment-of-learning statements (items). An analysis of the 14 items for reliability resulted in a Cronbach's alpha of .878, indicating a high correlation between the items. This suggested that the questionnaire possessed a high level of internal consistency.

Pilot Qualitative Survey

Two CAOs were interviewed using the qualitative instrument and both indicated that the questions were appropriate and they understood what was being asked. Interview protocol was developed to provide a more in depth exploration of dependent variables. Transcripts of interviews with the two pilot CAOs were reviewed, resulting in the researcher reducing redundancies in speech and focusing more on scripted questions.

Pilot Study Summary

The pilot study followed the development of the quantitative and qualitative survey instruments using a panel of three knowledgeable persons. Each reviewed two quantitative instruments providing comments that led to the final on-line survey instrument. Once the instrument was developed, five institution's CAOs received letters introducing the pilot study. Follow-up interviews revealed favorable comments regarding the letter and procedures for receiving and completing the survey. Reactions to the e-mail were positive, and range answers rather than questions that solicited specific values were selected for the instrument. Respondents indicated the survey instrument was "very easy." As a result of the pilot study, one item was split into two questions for the formal study. Two institutions were selected for pilot qualitative interviews based on the highest and lowest composite scores from the on-line quantitative survey instrument.

Quantitative Study

Dillman (2000) cites Tomaskovic-Devey, Leiter, and Thompson (1994), suggesting "theory argues that nonresponse [sic] is less likely to occur when the requested respondent clearly has the authority to respond, the capacity to respond, and motive to respond" (p. 339). For this reason a letter (Appendix H) was mailed to the CAO at each institution. This letter

introduced the study and indicated that the CAO would get an e-mail with a link to the survey. E-mail addresses were obtained from each institution's Web site. Web addresses came from the Higher Learning Commission's (2007) Web site. The CAO then received the e-mail (Appendix I) with a link to the survey instrument. Krathwohl (1998) suggests that "E-mail's novelty will only initially improve return rates" (p. 370). Non-responding CAOs received letters, reminding them of the link to access and complete the survey. Chief Academic Officers that remained non-responsive received the e-mail and link again. Additional e-mails continued for up to four e-mails.

Qualitative Study

Ten institution's CAOs were selected for interviews as a result of their composite scores on the ASLPS survey. The respondents of the institutions that had the five highest and five lowest scores on the ASLPS survey were selected for telephone interviews. Once institutions were designated for interviews, CAOs were contacted. Each CAO was interviewed using protocol found in Appendix K. These data were used to explore emerging themes that identify constructs or phenomena that were consistent among institutions with perceived successful assessment-of-learning programs.

Data Analysis

Data analysis involved six steps over both quantitative and qualitative processes.

Step 1: A pilot study was done. Data from the survey instrument and questionnaire were collected and examined for validity.

Step 2: Data were captured from the on-line survey. All data were imported into an EXCEL spreadsheet from the on-line survey software. This increased data accuracy and reduced clerical time.

Step 3: *T* tests and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were used to examine data from the quantitative survey and to identify significant differences between dependent and independent variables.

Step 4: Interviews were conducted with CAOs of institutions with the highest and lowest scores on the ASLPS survey. Interview questions were constructed to gain an understanding of the factors that influenced assessment-of-learning programs and contributed to the strategies used to focus on efficient and affordable assessment-of-learning programs.

Step 5: Each complete interview was transcribed and sent to each CAO to ensure that the interviewee's comments were understood correctly before including them in the study. Two CAOs returned transcriptions. Their edited remarks were incorporated into the final document.

Step 6: Qualitative responses from CAO interviews were used to explore emerging themes that identify constructs or phenomena that were consistent among institutions with perceived successful-of-learning programs and helped explain differences between institutional dynamics, administrative qualities and characteristics, and program support for those programs.

Step 7: Findings from these quantitative and qualitative data were reported in chapter V.

Summary

A pilot study was used to develop a survey instrument and questions to be used in the quantitative and qualitative portions of this study. Chief Academic Officers of community colleges in the Higher Learning Commission region were invited to respond to the ASLPS on-line survey. Using the ASLPS survey, 10 CAOs were selected for interviews to further explore the differences between the independent variables and perceived success of community college assessment programs in the Higher Learning Commission region.

Specific institutional dynamics, administrative qualities and characteristics, and program support examined through qualitative means were urban or rural location, accreditation status, CEO/CAO tenure, top-down/bottom-up decision making, mission language and emphasis, and budgetary support of the institution's assessment-of-learning program. Interviews explored common contributions to perceived program success and provided emerging themes.

CHAPTER IV:

RESULTS

Introduction

What follows are the data collected from a two-part, mixed-method study, designed to explore institutional dynamics, administrative qualities and characteristics, and program support in order to understand better how these factors affect perceived successful assessment-of-learning programs in community colleges in the Higher Learning Commission region. The initial portion of the study used a quantitative measure to answer seven of the eight guiding questions in this research and to gauge the level of perceived success of responding institutions. The second section of the study used personal interviews as a qualitative measure to explore further the effects of institutional dynamics, administrative qualities and characteristics, and program support on the perceived success of assessment-of-learning programs in ten selected community colleges.

Quantitative Findings

Introduction

The ASLPS on-line survey instrument, developed by the researcher and adapted from Huba and Freed's (2000) "Key Questions to Consider When Establishing or Evaluating an Assessment Program," was used for the quantitative portion of this study. The instrument was tested in a pilot study as described in chapter III. There were 174 institutions listed in the Higher Learning Commission region that contained "Community College" in their titles, excluding those institutions that participated in the pilot study. Letters were sent to the Chief Academic Officer (CAO) of each institution introducing the study and advising the CAO of an ensuing e-mail with a link to the survey. An e-mail was sent to each CAO with the link to the survey instrument. The

survey instrument was designed to allow only complete responses. Thirty-five (20.1%) CAOs responded to the initial e-mail. A second letter was mailed to those not responding, of which three (1.7%) responded. A second e-mail was sent, to which 21 (12.1%) CAOs responded. A third e-mail was sent to 115 (66.1%) non-responding institutions' CAOs at which time it was reported by some participants that the survey link was not allowing access to the survey instrument. A fourth e-mail was sent to those CAOs identified as receiving the e-mail with the erroneous link. Four CAOs declined to participate, remarking that they were new to the position. Another indicated that an impending retirement allowed "no time for a survey." A total of 88 (51.2%) complete on-line surveys were received. Eighty-three (47.7%) responses were deemed usable.

Demographics of the Sample

Every effort was made to provide Community College CAOs in the North Central Region an opportunity to respond to the survey in order to capture a broad representation of institutions. Of the 83 participating institutions, 52 (62.7%) were rural and 31 (37.3%) were urban. Seventeen (89.5%) of the nineteen states in the North Central Region were represented.

CEO tenure (Table 3) revealed a positive skew, indicating that the bulk of these

Table 3:
CEO Tenure Descriptive Statistics

CEO Tenure			
	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
5 or less	45	54.2	54.2
6-10	17	20.5	74.7
11-15	12	14.5	89.2
16-20	4	4.8	94.0
21 +	5	6.0	100.0
Total	83	100.0	

administrators more frequently served shorter tenure rather than longer. Forty-five (54.2%) CEOs' tenure fell within the "5 years or less" category. Additionally, 29 (35.0%) CEOs' tenure were in a 6-15 year range with the remaining nine (10.8%) serving "16+ years."

Similarly, CAO tenure (Table 4) revealed a positive skew, indicating a tendency toward shorter tenure rather than longer. Fifty-four (65.1%) of CAOs' tenure fell within the "5 years or

Table 4: CAO Tenure Descriptive Statistics

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
5 or less	54	65.1	65.1
6-10	19	22.9	88.0
11-15	7	8.4	96.4
16-20	2	2.4	98.8
21 +	1	1.2	100.0
Total	83	100.0	

less" category. Among CAOs, 26 (31.3%) served 6-15 years and only three (4%) for "16+ years."

Full-time enrollment (FTE) data for each responding CAOs institution was taken from the Higher Learning Commission Web page. The FTE mean (Table 5) for the 83 sample institutions was 2,114.18 ($SD = 2011.60$). FTE data range was 10,209 (92 to 10,301) with the 2nd

Table 5:
FTE Descriptive Statistics

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>
FTE	2114.18	2010.60	83
Total	68.55	8.699	

and 3rd quartiles falling between 889 and 2,244. Given the positive skew for the FTE distribution (Appendix M), the median value of 1,396 provided a less biased statistic and better represented the data.

Fifty-two (62.7%) CAOs indicated assessment-of-learning language was not included in their mission statement (Table 6) with the remaining 31 (37.3%) indicating it was. Sixty-eight (81.9%) of the responding CAOs indicated that assessment of learning garnered 5% or less of

Table 6:
Mission Language, % Budget, Management Style and Accreditation Frequencies

Independent Variable	Frequency	Percent
Mission Language		
No	52	62.7
Yes	31	37.3
Total	83	100
Percent of Budget		
5% or Less	68	81.9
6-10%	12	14.5
11-15%	3	3.6
Total	83	100.0
Management Style		
Bottom-up	66	79.5
Top-down	17	20.5
Total	83	100.0
Accreditation Method		
AQIP	34	41.0
PEAQ	49	59.0
Total	83	100.0

their institutions' general fund budgets, and a similar proportion, 66 (79.5%), suggested that decisions affecting assessment-of-learning programs come from bottom up. Of the 83 participating institutions, 34 (41.0%) were identified by the Higher Learning Commission as AQIP institutions, whereas 49 (59.0%) were PEAQ institutions.

The institutions whose CAO participated in the study were predominantly small (62.7%), with a median FTE of 1,396 based on a range of enrollments from a low of 92 to a high of 10,301. Both CEOs and CAOs had relatively short tenures (<10 years) at the institution for which they were reporting, with CAOs having slightly less tenure than CEOs. Assessment-of-learning language was included in the mission statements of 31 institutions, as reported by

responding CAOs. General fund budgets supported assessment initiatives at less than 5% in 81.9% of institutions represented. Similarly, 79.5% of the CAOs reported a bottom-up management style. More PEAQ institutions (59.0%) than AQIP institutions (41.0%) were represented in these data.

The composite score on the ASLPS survey, representing levels of success, is comprised of scores on 17 items (Table 7). The mean and standard deviation were derived from a five-point

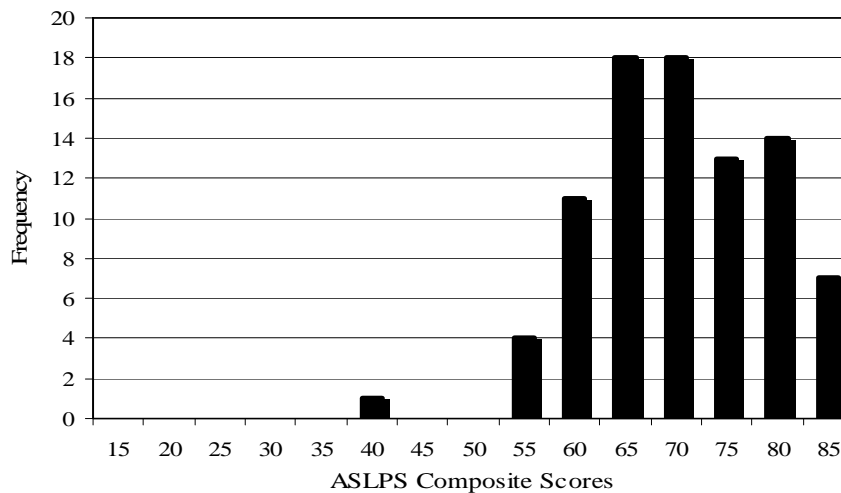
Table 7:
Assessment-of-Student-Learning Program Success (ASLPS) Survey Items

Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. Assessment leads to improvement so that the faculty can fulfill their responsibilities to students and to the public.	4.36	0.73
2. Assessment is part of a larger set of conditions that promote change at the institution.	4.47	0.63
3. Assessment provides feedback to students and the institution.	4.25	0.63
4. Assessment focuses on using data to address questions that people in the program and at the institution really care about.	4.20	0.73
5. Assessment flows from the institution's mission.	3.98	0.96
6. Assessment reflects the faculty's educational values.	3.86	0.75
7. The institution's educational programs have clear, explicitly stated purposes that guide assessment in the program.	3.94	0.85
8. Assessment is based on a conceptual framework that explains relationships among teaching, curriculum, learning, and assessment at the institution.	3.95	0.94
9. Faculty feel a sense of ownership and responsibility for assessment.	3.55	0.91
10. Faculty focus on experiences leading to outcomes as well as on the outcomes themselves.	3.75	0.76
11. Assessment is ongoing rather than episodic.	4.24	0.85
12. Assessment is cost-effective.	3.93	0.78
13. Assessment is based on data gathered from multiple measures.	4.42	0.78
14. Assessment supports diversity efforts rather than restricts them.	3.88	0.92
15. The assessment program itself is regularly evaluated.	3.83	0.92
16. Assessment has institution-wide support.	3.88	0.88
17. Representatives from across the education community are involved with assessment.	4.06	0.89

Likert scale on each item. The mean composite score for the 83 respondents was 68.55 with a

standard deviation of 8.70. That distribution has a slight negative skew (Figure 1), indicating that the bulk of the composite scores piled up at the higher rather than lower end.

Figure 1:
ASLPS Composite Score Distribution



Scale Reliability and Validity

The ASLPS on-line survey was comprised of 7 demographic and 17 assessment-of-learning statements (items). An analysis of the 17 items for reliability resulted in a Cronbach's alpha of .897, indicating a high correlation between the items. This suggests that the questionnaire possessed a high level of internal consistency.

Quantitative Test Results

What follows are four sections that discuss the quantitative test results of this study. The sections are: Summary of Independent Variables, Null Findings, Significant Findings, and Additional Analysis. The first seven hypotheses were tested for significance, using *t* test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).

Summary of Independent Variables

Table 8 summarizes the tests conducted, descriptive statistics, and level of significance for each of the independent variables. Detailed summaries of each test can be found in Appendix N. Four independent variables had two levels, prompting *t* tests on those items. The remaining

Table 8: Summary of Independent Variables				
Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	sig.
Type of Institution (<i>t</i> test)				
Rural	67.5	9.16	52	.170
Urban	70.3	7.71	31	
Accreditation Method (<i>t</i> test)				
AQIP	66.1	7.97	34	.029
PEAQ	70.3	8.84	49	
CEO Tenure (ANOVA)				
5 or less	68.1	9.61	45	.815
6-10	69.8	7.40	17	
11-15	69.9	8.44	12	
16-20	68.5	4.36	4	
21+	65.0	8.69	5	
CAO Tenure (ANOVA)				
5 or less	68.7	8.80	54	.083
6-10	66.0	7.88	19	
11-15	73.0	7.30	7	
16-20	79.0	7.07	2	
21+	57.0	n/a	1	
Decision-Making Style (<i>t</i> test)				
Bottom-up	69.4	9.04	66	.089
Top Down	65.4	6.51	17	
Mission Language (<i>t</i> test)				
Excluded	67.1	8.10	52	.042
Included	71.1	9.22	31	
Money Spent on Assessment (ANOVA)				
5% or less	67.7	8.88	68	.090
6-10%	70.9	6.78	12	
11-15%	77.7	5.51	3	

alpha = .05

three independent variables were composed of more than two levels of the independent variable requiring Analysis of Variance. Two variables tested statistically significant at $\alpha = .05$: “Accreditation Method,” and “Mission Language.” These are discussed in the section Significant Findings.

Null Findings

As seen in the previous table (Table 8), analysis of variance was used to examine the differences between five classifications of CEO Tenure/CAO Tenure and six classifications of Money Spent on Assessment of Learning. Likewise, *t* test analyses were conducted on Type of Institutions and Decision-Making Style. Each of the five null hypotheses of no difference in these variables was accepted at a .05 alpha level.

CEO and CAO tenure classifications were: Five years or less, 6 to 10 years, 11-15 years, 16-20 years and 21 plus years. Despite the greater number of CAOs with 5 years or less tenure, the mean score at any level of CEO tenure did not exceed a $M = 70$, as compared to two categories for CAO tenure that did exceed a $M = 70$. This may be the result of bias, as CAOs were the respondents to the survey. Only two CAOs responded in the 16-20 years category, and one in the 21+ category. Although the resulting statistic was at an alpha of .083, it was interesting that CAOs with 11-15 years had a higher mean score than CAOs with less than 10 years. These data suggested that the tenure of the CAO may influence the perceived levels of success.

Although six categories of Money Spent on Assessment of Learning were available on the survey, all respondents indicated that less than 15% of the budget was allocated to assessment of learning. None responded to the upper three categories above 15%. However, it was of interest that institutions spending 5% or less on assessment ($M = 67.74$, $SD = 8.88$) had

lower mean scores than institutions spending 6-10% ($M = 70.9$, $SD = 6.78$), and institutions spending 6-10% had lower mean scores than institutions spending 11-15% ($M = 77.7$, $SD = 5.51$).

T test analyses of the ASLPS survey data indicated no significant difference in perceived levels of success between institutions that were urban or rural or between institutions with a bottom-up or top-down decision making style. However, it is of interest that CAOs indicating bottom-up decision making scored higher means on all but two of the 17 ASLPS items: Item 10, “Assessment provides feedback to students and the institution;” and Item 11, “Assessment focuses on using data to address questions that people in the program and at the institution really care about.”

Significant Findings

T test analyses were conducted on accreditation method and mission language. Statistically significant differences were found. In each case, the null hypotheses of no difference between mean ASLPS survey scores was rejected at a .05 alpha level.

The null hypothesis for accreditation method states: H_{02} : There is no significant difference in perceived levels of success of assessment-of-learning programs between AQIP and PEAQ institutions. At a .05 alpha level, the null hypothesis of no difference between the mean ASLPS survey score was rejected. There was a statistically significant difference in ASLPS survey scores of institutions that were accredited through the AQIP method as compared to PEAQ-accredited institutions. In these data, PEAQ-accredited institutions scored higher than AQIP on the ASLPS survey, indicating a higher level of perceived success. Comparisons of item responses based on AQIP and PEAQ accreditation yielded three items with statistically significant differences. PEAQ institutions yielded higher mean scores than AQIP institutions on

these items. ASLPS item 8 states: Assessment is based on a conceptual framework that explains relationships among teaching, curriculum, learning, and assessment at the institution. ASLPS item 13 states: Assessment is based on data gathered from multiple measures. Again, PEAQ-accredited institutions were rated higher by their CAOs as having assessment-of-learning programs based on data gathered from multiple measures. Item 16 looked at institution-wide support for the assessment-of-learning programs. This may imply that CAOs from PEAQ institutions believe they do a better job of providing an assessment of learning program with a conceptual framework that explains relationships among teaching, curriculum, learning, and assessment; base assessment on data gathered from multiple sources; and have garnered institution-wide support for their assessment-of-learning programs.

A *t* test analysis of Mission Language data indicated a significant difference in ASLPS composite scores on institutions that included assessment language in their mission statement with those that did not. The null hypothesis for assessment language in the mission statement is as follows: H_{06} : There is no significant difference in perceived levels of success of assessment-of-learning programs between institutions that include or exclude assessment-of-learning language in their mission statement. At the .05 alpha level, the null hypothesis of no difference between means of institutions that included or excluded assessment language in the mission statement was rejected. A statistically significant difference was found between means of institutions that excluded assessment language in the mission statement and the institutions that included language. In these data the mean score of institutions that included assessment language in their mission statement was higher than those that did not.

Comparisons of item responses based on mission language yielded three items with statistically significant differences at a .05 alpha. Institutions that purported that they included

assessment-of-learning language in their mission statements had higher mean scores than institutions without assessment-of-learning language in their mission statements. ASLPS item 2 states: Assessment is part of a larger set of conditions that promote change at the institution. ASLPS item 5 states: Assessment flows from the institution's mission. ASLPS item 15 states: The assessment program itself is regularly evaluated.

Additional Analyses

Given that accreditation method (AQIP/PEAQ) and Mission Language were both significant, a crosstabs analysis was done to explore relationships among independent variables. Data from the AQIP/PEAQ x Mission Language crosstab revealed that PEAQ institutions more frequently included assessment in their mission language than did AQIP institutions. Fifty-two (62.7%) of CAOs responding indicated that assessment language was not incorporated in the mission statement. However, among the remaining 31 (37.3%) that responded affirmatively, 22 (71.0%) were accredited through the PEAQ program while nine (29%) were accredited through the AQIP program. Although a greater number of institutions do not include assessment-of-learning language in their mission statements, a large portion (71%) of those that do were PEAQ-accredited institutions.

Summary of Quantitative Findings

Eighty-three CAOs from community colleges representing 17 states responded to the ASLPS on-line survey. Responding CAOs reported that both CEOs and CAOs more frequently served shorter tenure rather than longer. Fifty-one (62.7%) CAOs indicated that assessment-of-learning language was not in their institution's mission statement. Sixty-eight (81.9%) of the responding CAOs indicated that assessment-of-learning garnered 5% or less of their institutions' general fund budget, and a similar proportion, 66 (79.5%), suggested that decisions affecting

assessment-of-learning programs come from bottom-up. Of the 83 participating institutions, 49 (59.0%) were identified by the Higher Learning Commission as PEAQ institutions, whereas 34 (41%) were AQIP institutions. Although the FTE mean for the 83 sample institutions was 2,114 ($SD = 2011$), the median value of 1,396 provided a more balanced description of the type of institutions that reported. ASLPS composite scores were calculated from 17 items and represented levels of success. The mean composite score on the ASLPS survey for the 83 respondents was 68.55, with a standard deviation of 8.70. A slight negative skew indicated that the bulk of the composite scores were at higher scores.

Five null hypotheses were rejected as a result of data from analysis of variance and *t* tests. These hypotheses were on: CEO Tenure/CAO Tenure, Money Spent on Assessment of Learning, Type of Institution, and Decision-Making Style. It was interesting that CAOs with 11-15 years had a higher mean score than CAOs with less than 10 years, and that institutions spending 5% or less on assessment ($M = 67.74$, $SD = 8.88$) had lower mean scores than institutions spending 6-10% ($M = 70.9$, $SD = 6.78$), and institutions spending 6-10% had lower mean scores than institutions spending 11-15% ($M = 77.7$, $SD = 5.51$). CAOs indicating bottom-up decision making scored higher means on all but two of the 17 ASLPS items: Item 10, “Assessment provides feedback to students and the institution;” and Item 11, “Assessment focuses on using data to address questions.

Two independent variables showed statistically significant differences in composite scores: “Accreditation Method,” and “Mission Language.” According to analysis by two-tailed *t* tests, statistically significant differences in ASLPS survey scores were found when comparing AQIP with PEAQ institutions and when comparing institutions that included assessment-of-learning language in their mission statement with those that did not. PEAQ-accredited

institutions had higher composite scores than AQIP institutions on the ASLPS survey. *T* test analysis on the 17 items of the ASLPS survey revealed PEAQ institutions had significantly higher means on three items: Assessment is based on a conceptual framework that explains relationships among teaching, curriculum, learning, and assessment at the institution; assessment is based on data gathered from multiple measures; and assessment has institution-wide support for the assessment-of-learning programs. According to analysis by two-tailed *t* tests, statistically significant differences in ASLPS composite scores were found when comparing institutions that excluded assessment language in their mission statement with those that included assessment language. Means of institutions that included assessment language in their mission statements were higher. *T* test comparisons on the 17 items of the ASLPS survey revealed three significant findings with institutions that excluded mission language as compared to those that included assessment language in their mission statements. Institutions that included assessment language in their mission statements had higher mean scores on three ASLPS survey items: Assessment is part of a larger set of conditions that promote change at the institution; assessment flows from the institution's mission; and the assessment program itself is regularly evaluated. Data from the AQIP and PEAQ accreditation by Mission Language crosstab indicated PEAQ institutions more frequently included assessment in their mission language than AQIP institutions.

Qualitative Findings

Introduction

The qualitative question further explored differences in institutional dynamics, administrative qualities and characteristics, assessment-of-learning program support to perceived levels of success of assessment-of-learning programs, and were used to identify common traits contributing to perceived program success. The narrative descriptions of CAOs that follow are

based upon personal interviews. Coding that organized these data have emerged from the ten interviews that appear in two groups: The five CAO interviews from institutions with the highest composite scores on the ASLPS survey, followed by the five CAO interviews from those institutions with the lowest composite scores. After introducing the institutions with narrative summary, this account discusses Thematic Patterns and Meta-Themes derived from the data and then offers five meta-themes in list form. Names of CAOs and their institutions have been changed in the profiles to maintain confidentiality.

High-Scoring Institutions

Ms. Royce, County Community College

County Community College is a rural community college with less than 500 full-time undergraduate students. The institution is accredited through the PEAQ program by the Higher Learning Commission. Both the CEO and CAO have been in their current positions for five years or less. Based on self-reporting by the CAO, no assessment-of-learning language exists in the institution's mission statement. The institution budgets 5% or less of its general fund for assessment of learning, and decisions affecting its assessment-of-learning program come from the bottom-up.

Ms. Royce indicated that her Dean of Instruction has the most influence on the operation of their assessment-of-learning program and that he has a great deal of knowledge of assessment, a desire to bring assessment "full circle," and is "very measurement oriented." She expressed that the CEO trusts "that we are doing a good job," appreciates reports, and is "knowledgeable about what we are trying to do." Further, she indicated that the CEO is interested in how the "whole college is doing academically." Ms. Royce reported that being in a rural community "makes

assessment of learning far more important” and indicated that developmental students did well as a result of their assessment process “which really focuses on continual improvement.”

When addressing her own management style, Ms. Royce said that she has an “open-door style” and that anyone can approach her. She indicated that she appreciates and expects competency, that she sees herself as friendly and informal, and that she encourages people to “stretch themselves and to accept failure as a learning process.”

Ms. Royce initially stated that the impetus for assessment comes from the “Feds down to the States.” She cited exit exam scores that were better than the national average as evidence that their institution is measuring whether or not students are learning. She said that their assessment-of-learning program “is faculty driven,” and suggested that the “impetus comes more from the success we see we have than it does from that accountability issue.”

Budget for this institution’s assessment program is determined by Ms. Royce and the Dean. Primary expenditures include the mandatory COMPASS, exit exams, and conferences on assessment. Ms. Royce said that the staff and committee provide budgetary input. The assessment committee apparently is faculty driven, as she stated, “The faculty do an outcomes report for every course at the end of every semester, and those are turned into the Dean of Instruction.” Each faculty member then has a personal meeting with the Dean to discuss findings and to examine to what degree competencies have been met in the course. Ms. Royce indicated that assessment of learning was faculty driven “from the very beginning” and that they meet at least annually with the Dean to go over the outcomes. She indicated that “at the end of the year there’s a compilation of all the outcomes for all the courses.”

Ms. Royce indicated that although there is not assessment-of-learning language in their institution’s mission statement, there is reference to quality. She suggested that “the assessment

process that we have is aimed at providing that quality education in a continual fashion.” She doesn’t believe that the “assessment committee thinks much about the mission statement” as they look at assessment data.

Ms. Royce indicated that their assessment-of-learning “process” was “in order” prior to their last reaccreditation visit. She has placed a “lot of emphasis” on the PEAQ process. She reemphasized the importance of knowing that the Higher Learning Commission was going to be looking at assessment programs. This was apparently motivation for them to get their system in place and that “they had all the records of it.” The importance of faculty participation in the assessment-of-learning program was reiterated, stressing faculty involvement with outcomes reports and meeting with administration. Ms. Royce said she “takes time to meet with each faculty member and talk about what they’re doing and they get a chance to be creative.”

Mr. Leroy, High Plains Community College

High Plains Community College is a rural community college with about 500 full-time undergraduate students. The institution is accredited through the PEAQ program by the Higher Learning Commission. Both the CEO and CAO have been in their current positions for five years or less. Based on self-reporting by the CAO, assessment-of-learning language is included in the institution’s mission statement. The institution budgets 5% or less of its general fund for assessment of learning and decisions affecting their assessment-of-learning program come from the bottom-up.

Mr. Leroy indicated that he, in his capacity as Academic Dean, has the most influence on the operation of their assessment-of-learning program. He cited a Masters in Higher Education Administration and three years on the assessment team as qualities he possesses that affect the assessment-of-learning program. He also is head of the academics standards committee which

“oversees a lot of various situations that come up concerning students, faculty, and curriculum.” He oversees various types of “committees that work with student evaluation and assessment.” Although he indicated that he works with faculty, students, and different college entities and universities within the state and outside the state, he did not indicate the extent or nature of that work.

Mr. Leroy suggested that the institution is still in the process of “feeling out, getting a handle” on what the president’s administrative skills are. He indicated that there is a lot of “leveraging” and commented that the CEO “believes in the abilities and the qualities of the people that are underneath him” in getting things done. Setting time lines and time frames seems to be an important activity of the CEO, allowing people the power and authority to get things done. Mr. Leroy believes that his president is easy to work with and tends to be “people wise.”

Although Mr. Leroy did not indicate personal administrative characteristics or qualities associated with his tenure as CAO, he suggested that he is in his current position as a result of his experience. He cited directing programs, working with faculty and professional development technology, assessment, and curriculum as areas in which he has experience. He believes his training, experience as a project director and grant writer, and his analytical style have helped him in the assessment area.

Mr. Leroy seemed a bit confused as to whether his institution was in an urban or rural setting. He finally commented that his institution was “pretty well isolated” in a state that tends to be very rural with the nearest major airport 110 miles away. A description of his institution and its type did not provide useful information relative to the influence of the rural setting on the institution’s assessment-of-learning program.

Although Mr. Leroy indicated that he was “not a manager per se,” he indicated that it was his style to “allow people to make choices that need to be made.” He identified his style of management as “situational,” explaining:

“Whatever the situation is, I find a way to work with it, deal with it. If it requires me to be the person in charge, I do so. If it requires me to be a team person, ...I do that, also.”

Mr. Leroy initially suggested that most of the impetus for their assessment-of-learning program has come from the faculty, “because they are the ones that work with the students on a daily basis.” He further expanded that thought, indicating that the student assessment committee and tenured faculty are the ones that have provided most of the impetus and suggested that was “not necessarily a bad thing for us.”

Despite Mr. Leroy’s preparation of a budget for his area, he indicated he was not aware of who established the guidelines for their institution’s assessment-of-learning program budget. However, he said, “basically, that budget is set by myself and with our comptroller,” and further said that the budget is specifically used by the student assessment committee for an assessment coordinator to purchase assessment test materials, and to “send a team to various assessment professional development workshops.”

“Faculty’s involved in every aspect,” according to Mr. Leroy. He suggested that some of the faculty’s involvement has helped them evolve “into a very good assessment committee.” He further indicated that adjunct faculty members who teach some general education classes are involved in the assessment-of-learning process.

Mr. Leroy’s response indicated that he was unclear as to what was meant by “assessment-of-learning language” in the mission statement. He seemed to misunderstand “assessment-of-learning language,” thinking the question was about non-English language instruction. He did

point out that they had “purchased a number of books that go into the faculty lounge that deal specifically with assessment.” He indicated that faculty members are expected to use material on assessment acquired by the assessment coordinator or himself.

High Plains Community College is accredited under the PEAQ program, and according to Mr. Leroy, did quite well with the last accreditation visit despite the fact that there were some things “that weren’t being done.” This was before he was Academic Dean. Since the last accreditation visit, High Plains has added to their student learning outcomes, developed an assessment procedure manual, redesigned forms, and initiated CAPP as an assessment tool. An effort was made to assess students who “come into their two-year program and how long it takes them to finish.” He cited the NCA accreditation process as contributing to the growth of their “assessment policies.” He suggested that the process associated with the PEAQ program caused his institution to develop a type of paper trail that provides evidence of what the students are “doing in the classroom.”

Mr. Leroy believes that High Plains Community College has “made leaps and bounds in the last few years as far as student assessment is concerned.” He feels that the faculty is involved in every aspect of the assessment-of-learning process, including the choosing of the Assessment Coordinator each year.

Dr. Friend, Exploration Community College

Like the previous community colleges Exploration Community College is rural; but unlike them, it has a full-time undergraduate student population of about 2500. The institution is accredited through the PEAQ program by the Higher Learning Commission. Exploration Community College also differs from the two previous community colleges regarding administrative tenure. At Exploration both the CEO and CAO have extended tenure. The CEO

has been in his position for 11 to 15 years. Dr. Friend has been CAO at Exploration Community College for 17 years. She self-reported that assessment-of-learning language is included in the institution's mission statement and that Exploration budgets from 11 to 15% of its general fund for assessment of learning. Further, the CAO indicated that decisions affecting the institution's assessment-of-learning program come from the bottom-up.

Dr. Friend indicated that the CAO is the "lead person on all of the learning assessment initiatives." She believes a research background and commitment to conducting research on students' learning are qualities that affect an assessment-of-learning program. Exploration Community College faculty is unionized, so maintaining interpersonal skills is important. Similarly, Dr. Friend expressed a need for "good institutional research skills to create formats and templates" that enhance instruction and to help initiate a system of learning assessment.

Dr. Friend reiterated that the CAO needed to have the ability to create trust relationships with faculty, a deep and long understanding of community college teaching and student learning, an "intimacy with the college curriculum," and a background in institutional research. She suggested that long-term, mutually respectful relationships and credibility with faculty and continuous service at the college are invaluable in creating change. She indicated that people must initially trust that "what you are doing is not superficial." Dr. Friend indicated that once change begins, "then it's possible for faculty who are used to reading research to see that they are getting improvements in their students' learning." This, she says, is self-motivating. "Eventually, change is self-rewarding and perpetuating, which results in credibility, so that when you have to ask faculty to take risks again, there is a willingness to try."

Dr. Friend views the following as personal CEO characteristics or qualities that have contributed to Exploration Community College's assessment-of-learning program:

- the president's willingness to support all of the learning assessment initiatives on the campus
- the president's public references to learning assessment initiatives with pride
- the president's frequent speeches about learning assessment to external audiences
- the funding of learning assessment initiatives, and
- the president's support of on-going learning assessment in contract negotiations.

Dr. Friend expressed the view that her campus is in a district that is rural despite being near a small city. She believes that the only way setting affects the institution's assessment-of-learning program is that the institution is in the North Central region of the country and the Higher Learning Commission has more influence on their location. She indicated that "setting, rural or urban, probably doesn't have very much to do with the success of the learning assessment initiative." What is important is a means of communication that reaches all faculty.

Dr. Friend described a culture of decentralization and autonomy when addressing her management style. She indicated that most initiatives have faculty leadership and that these individuals are provided remuneration for the work they do and that they also have a working relationship with the CAO.

Dr. Friend suggested that the motivation that comes from doing a self-study for regional reaccreditation is the impetus for their assessment-of-learning program. "There is a great deal of emphasis in this region as there is now in all regions of the country on learning assessment." She gave credit to a "core group of faculty who were willing to take risks with their good names" as being "key to implementing" their program. These faculty members are "respected by their peers, have become involved in learning assessment initiatives at the course level, the classroom level, general education learning level, and program level."

A portion of the funding for assessment of learning at Exploration is a negotiated item. Mutual agreement between faculty association and the college allows a certain amount of money to be set aside each year that is used to “support faculty initiatives and learning assessment,” according to Dr. Friend. Generally, she said, “There is an expectation that learning assessment is being conducted at every level of learning on this campus and so every budget on the campus is spending some money on learning assessment.”

Dr. Friend indicated that they have focused on learning assessment for the past six years. Exploration Community College’s faculty development program supports learning assessment initiatives. Two mandatory in-service activities, each a week in length, occur during the academic year, one in August and another in January. To support this Dr. Friend explained, “The Center for Teaching and Learning Excellence is a faculty-run organization established for the faculty development of peers, so all of the workshops have been developed and run through the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning.” Dr. Friend referred to using a consultant for doing a workshop on assessing critical thinking:

... but very quickly we learned that identifying faculty leaders and then getting them the kind of faculty support and development that they needed in order to write a class, to teach to their peers for credit toward promotion, was a really successful way to increase faculty development in student learning.

Dr. Friend stated that part-time faculty members are engaged in these activities through in-service twice a year as well. The focus is on assessment of learning. Full-time faculty members are paid to develop and train adjunct faculty on student learning assessment rubrics. Adjunct faculty members are compensated to participate in the training. Dr. Friend believes a faculty-driven culture has been created by:

- spreading the leadership
- spreading the compensation
- recognizing accomplishments

As a result of this training Dr. Friend noticed that the area most affected is general education instruction across the curriculum and in multi-section core courses. “Everybody uses the same syllabus and the same learning assessment approach.” Data are collected “from all faculty members on one learning assessment using the same shared rubric.” Dr. Friend stated that this has “raised the level of students’ learning across all sections” and has “created much more sharing among full- and part-time faculty who teach the same courses, and it has greatly strengthened ... instruction, [and] student learning.”

Although Exploration’s mission statement does not include assessment-of-learning language, it does address achievement and the learning experience. Dr. Friend said that:

fostering achievement through responsible learning experiences means that you have the responsibility to not just teach the course and hope for the best, but teach the course and then assess your students’ learning to find out if ... they have learned.

Dr. Friend indicated that as Exploration Community College faced reaccreditation it was very clear the Higher Learning Commission had expectations for student learning assessment. She indicated that some things changed over a period of time, but the fact that they were facing a ten-year reaccreditation “influenced the way” they began learning assessment. “The way learning assessment on campus has evolved is much more directly related to the processes that we found most successful.” In an effort to sustain the assessment of learning, Exploration Community College built learning assessment into annual faculty performance objectives. She indicated that they “changed what had been a rather loose evaluation or self-evaluation,” and became “very

directive” about what faculty members were to report on so that “action looping” information could be collected. She explained further:

In one year’s performance objectives a faculty member may be just developing the baseline data on student learning in a single multi-section course or in one general education area in a course or a set of courses, or they can also use program-level assessment. In the following year we expect to learn what they did with their student learning findings, how they made changes based on those findings, and the results of those changes.

Exploration is in the third full year of looking at “action looping.” Performance objectives and data are examined every September, so faculty can use the data in the current semester. These data are used to create “action-looping” descriptions. Dr. Friend indicated that it is her responsibility for this activity. She is responsible for taking contract language on annual performance objectives and developing a more specific description of those objectives. Faculty supported this activity because they could see that it was important to the self-study. Once a ten-year accreditation was achieved, there was a brief moment where faculty questioned the necessity to continue with assessment activities. She stated that rational descriptions and help sessions conducted by the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning contributed to continued annual performance objectives. She also indicated that she is willing to assist with drafts of annual reports before they are turned in to her as final reports.

Dr. Friend emphasized the importance of developing faculty leadership, faculty compensation, and faculty credit for assessment-of-learning efforts. She emphasized the importance of “putting them [faculty] in the role of experts whenever a spokesperson is required.” She stated, “I’ve been to many conferences where they say it’s faculty driven and the

only people making the presentation are three administrators and one tired-out English faculty member.”

Dr. Kosik, Stone County Community College

Dr. Kosik is CAO at Stone County Community College, a rural community college with a little over 800 full-time undergraduate students. The institution is accredited through the PEAQ program by the Higher Learning Commission. Both the CEO and CAO have been in their current positions for six to ten years. Dr. Kosik self-reported that there is no assessment-of-learning language in the institution’s mission statement. The institution budgets 5% or less of its general fund for assessment of learning, and decisions affecting their assessment-of-learning program come from the bottom-up.

Dr. Kosik indicated that she has the most influence on what is done in assessment at Stone County Community College. Her “role basically has been to teach faculty what assessment is all about, to give them a better understanding of the extent to which assessment can vary by program, and to express the value of applying multiple methods of measurement.” She pointed out that “at this stage the department chairs are making those determinations.”

Dr. Kosik attributed the direction they have taken in assessment to her many years of experience. She indicated that her last 25 to 26 years have been in institutions accredited by the North Central Association. She believes it was in the early 90s when the Higher Learning Commission began to “take real interest in student learning outcomes and their measurement.” Her experience with the Higher Learning Commission and workshops with Trudy Banta and others gave her the opportunity to establish assessment programs on three different campuses. She believes some teaching abilities, patience, and persistence are important qualities that have contributed to Stone County’s assessment-of-learning program. Dr. Kosik admitted that a

looming reaccreditation at the second institution she served prompted quick action on their assessment-of-learning program. She indicated that it was this experience that brought her to her third campus where she was hired to get the campus “organized to do assessment” for an impending reaccreditation in two years. Qualities she reiterated as significant to assessment-of-learning programs are patience, leading and guiding by example, and providing templates for learning assessment.

Dr. Kosik previously served as CEO on another campus and commented that a sense of urgency to meet demands of accreditation drove the assessment program there, demanding that a plan be in place and working before the accreditation team arrived. She believes this was true for other CEOs, at other institutions for whom she has worked. Dr. Kosik indicated that Stone County Community College is in a rural setting, but she believes that an urban environment may offer more opportunities to “convene with others” on assessment-of-learning issues. She believes less travel would reduce expenses and make it easier to involve more people at the grass roots level. She indicated that the three campuses on which she had previously served were rural and they would bring expertise on campus in an effort to “expose as many of our assessing faculty” as possible.

Dr. Kosik sees herself as very accessible, approachable, and available. She claimed to “adhere strongly to the philosophy that to get the work done, it needs to be delegated to individuals who have both the skill and the motivation to take on and complete the task.” When selecting people who are motivated and skilled in assessment, she considers them based on motivation and skills and “finds meaningful incentives – and some of those are more intangible than tangible – or ways to provide the skill set and then to coach and mentor along the way to

make sure that the big task is being broken down into manageable pieces and that the pieces are being accomplished.”

Dr. Kosik believes that the initial impetus for their assessment-of-learning program was the “perceived external threat of accreditation withdrawal, or accreditation association backlash.” She indicated that “faculty in the early days didn’t like the fact that they had to do it [assessment of learning] because of accreditation.” According to Dr. Kosik, North Central has “really softened its approach” since that time, and campuses are less concerned about accreditation. She credits North Central with moving assessment of learning from an accreditation requirement to a desire to do assessment “to get a feel for what our students are learning and how we can improve our programs.” This is a shift that she feels has been successful at Stone County Community College.

At Stone County, assessment data are used every year to make budget decisions. When Dr. Kosik began, “the plan was for the entire institution to get involved. Dr. Kosik’s description of how Stone County’s budgeting evolved helps one understand how timing sometimes lags behind.

Obviously, the student learning outcomes piece of assessment on the instructional side was clear-cut. But we were hopeful that we would bring the administrative/business side of the house and the student services side along in the planning process. That really didn’t happen because there wasn’t the same kind of pressure on those pieces of the operation. We still talk about the role that they play in institutional effectiveness, but to a much lesser extent than we did when we had a ten-year visit on the horizon. So in terms of budget, annually the departments analyze their assessment data, determine what kind of changes they want to make, either to the way they are conducting assessment, perhaps

how they are measuring, or to the delivery of instruction based on the data and will make a best guess about what the budget implications of such changes would cost. Sometimes they are major. ...Sometimes they are minor,...but we do look at the assessment data and consider what are the budget outcomes. In fact, we have a template that the department chairs complete this time each year and there is a spot for them to talk about what are the budget implications. And regrettably, this stuff always comes after the budget for the upcoming fiscal year is completed, so our timing is a bit off, but it does have a residual effect in upcoming budget cycles.

Forty full-time faculty and 350 part-time people are employed at Stone County. Dr. Kosik indicated that “full-time faculty [sic] are all intimately involved at their department levels.” Academic affairs and institutional research personnel are involved in an annual fall retreat where faculty meet by department and determine the focus of assessment. From this activity a plan is developed to measure class objectives for classes taught by full- and part-time faculty. At the end of the year a faculty retreat is held where findings are summarized. This is indicative of the level of involvement of faculty in which they determine what and how to measure at the department level. Because some departments are small – that is, one-person and two-person departments of full-time people – department chairs pay part-time faculty to help with the assessment work. Full-time faculty members are very influential over the large number of part-time faculty.

Although the mission statement at Stone County does not include assessment-of-learning language, Dr. Kosik believes the college’s mission statement, values statement, and strategic directives address assessment of learning in ways “that are just as public but maybe not quite as catchy or abbreviated. Dr. Kosik said, “We talk about ourselves as being a ‘learning college.’”

A couple of years ago Stone County sent a group to the Annual NCA Conference to look at the AQIP process of reaccreditation and the group was not impressed. Dr. Kosik indicated that they heard people saying it was difficult for them to organize around projects and Stone County had “hammered out a process that everyone understood and liked” under the current PEAQ program.

There are a couple of campuses here in this state, community colleges, that have gone to the AQIP model and that has happened because the president and the board wanted it to happen. They were very involved at the top, and we could see there was no prayer of that happening here, and it would be fighting a losing battle, so we continued on as we have been because we feel like we at least are behind the wheel.

Dr. Kosik recognized the need for accreditation to get federal funding, but more importantly recognized that North Central requirements have institutionalized assessment of learning to the extent that it has become an “internalized process.” She indicated that griping about assessment has been reduced over the past five to ten years and that participation in assessment is now in the faculty contract. Points are given on the annual evaluation for participation in assessment, providing some tangible expectations and results. Dr. Kosik suggested that assessment of learning is a natural outcome of the paradigm shift from teaching to learning and that by conducting assessment activities with course delivery and outcomes measurement, “we are learning how to better strengthen what we do in the classroom.” She can’t imagine that there is another campus in the nation that “hasn’t started up with assessment yet.”

Dr. Wagnon, State Community College

State Community College is a rural community college with about 1,100 full-time undergraduate students. The institution is PEAQ accredited by the Higher Learning Commission.

Both the CEO and CAO have been in their current positions for five years or less. Based on self-reporting by the CAO, assessment-of-learning language is included in the institution's mission statement. The institution budgets 5% or less of its general fund for assessment of learning, and decisions affecting their assessment-of-learning program come from the bottom-up.

Dr. Wagnon believes that faculty rather than any one person has the most influence on the operation of their assessment-of-learning program. Qualities that affect the program come from "several years of training on how best to put together assessment methods." Work on assessment is done within divisions and forwarded to the CAO's office. Dr. Wagnon indicated that passion about student learning, willingness to compile and track data and keep up with it, and an interest in improvement of the learning process are important characteristics that affect their program.

Dr. Wagnon has put together assessment plans at other two-year campuses. She suggested that assessment of learning and student learning go hand-in-hand. She believes that the personal characteristics she brings to assessment of learning are a commitment to student learning and a belief that "assessment really matters."

Dr. Wagnon attributed their president's commitment to student learning along with a keen interest in curriculum as characteristics that have contributed to their assessment-of-learning program. She indicated that the president is very much a person who looks at all curriculum and curriculum changes. Dr. Wagnon admitted that this can be annoying to faculty, but believes that the president is really interested in their entire "interest enterprise," something they believe is at the heart of what they do.

The fact that State Community College doesn't have another nearby two-year campus with a group of peers with whom to talk about assessment on a regular basis could have negative

impact on their assessment-of-learning program. They are a relatively small institution and somewhat isolated. They plan to send a third of their faculty to the Higher Learning Commission meeting in Chicago over the next three years, thus providing an interaction opportunity for all faculty.

Dr. Wagnon sees herself as a participatory manager. She meets regularly with her Deans and trusts them to manage their budgets and their areas. She suggested that she is primarily there for unusual situations, but is very interested in what's going on. She indicated that she is not a micromanager.

Dr. Wagnon thinks that the impetus for their assessment-of-learning program has come from the Higher Learning Commission, which has caused the college to institutionalize assessment of learning and look at it in a more formal way. She does not believe that assessment of learning is a new concept to faculty since they assess students as they teach. The way the institution has managed assessment of learning has definitely come from the Higher Learning Commission.

State Community College uses a zero-based approach to budgeting, of which assessment is a critical line item that is discussed each year. A small percentage of the total budget is designated for assessment. The actual assessment budget is a part of Dr. Wagnon's budget and is primarily for faculty to attend conferences that may improve the way they do assessment or validate what they are doing.

Dr. Wagnon has been at State Community College for less than a year. An assessment plan had already been developed with faculty involvement. Changes have occurred in the composition of the Assessment Committee. Some have questioned whether an assessment committee is needed and how it's going to work. Dr. Wagnon indicated that rich discussion

around the topic of assessment has helped faculty in terms of their professional development focus, specifically the evaluation of what they are doing in the classroom, and has helped make clear connections between outcomes and assessment. Outcomes are being tied back to pieces and parts within the course, resulting in a more sophisticated view of course design based on assessment. At State Community College part-time faculty are not formally engaged in assessment but tend to follow full-time faculty. Some of the part-time faculty work with full-time faculty in talking about assessment, looking at assessment models, and gathering data specific to an area they are assessing. Plans are being made to start an adjunct program with a series of activities which will include assessment.

Dr. Wagnon believes that inclusion of assessment-of-learning language in their mission statement has reinforced their assessment-of-learning program. The mission statement is pointed to often. “It’s somewhat like a learning outcome.” The mission statement is viewed as an “umbrella learning outcome” that is used “to tie things back to.” The mission statement is referenced during budget discussions and when talking about a new initiative. Assessment is piece of that mission statement and is important in “completing the picture,” as a critical piece of what State Community College does, according to Dr. Wagnon.

Being a PEAQ institution has helped State Community College maintain assessment “status quo.” Dr. Wagnon thinks that AQIP institutions deal with assessment differently and seemingly are more systematic. To Dr. Wagnon AQIP institutions appear to be doing about the same amount of assessment as PEAQ institutions, but their reporting pieces seem to be more on-going. From Dr. Wagnon’s experience PEAQ appears more cumulative, creating a bigger event over a longer length of time. Dr. Wagnon believes the AQIP model may be stronger.

Dr. Wagnon indicated that they are re-evaluating the college's assessment-of-learning program and working to improve it. She is baffled by the idea such an integral part of teaching has become almost an odd piece. "It should be intuitive, it should be natural, and it doesn't feel that way. It's almost become a dreaded word, and I think that is unfortunate."

Low-Scoring Institutions

Dr. Kerr, Regional Community College

Regional Community College is a rural community college with nearly 2,000 full-time undergraduate students. The institution is accredited through the AQIP program by the Higher Learning Commission. Both the CEO and CAO have been in their current positions for five years or less. Based on self-reporting by the CAO, there is no assessment-of-learning language in the institution's mission statement. The institution budgets 5% or less of its general fund for assessment of learning, and decisions affecting their assessment-of-learning program come from the bottom-up.

Dr. Kerr stated that "formal" influence on the operation of their assessment-of-learning program has come from a faculty member who is chair of their Assessment Committee and "informal impact" from himself. The Assessment Committee chair is fairly motivated, has a very strong interest in assessment of learning, and has gained some experience from the Higher Learning Commission Conferences. Dr. Kerr indicated it is these conferences that have motivated the chair and given him a greater perspective of assessment of learning. Dr. Kerr believes that this person, like many at Regional Community College, is "over booked," limiting his ability to spend a lot of time on assessment of learning. The Assessment Committee Chair tends to be very focused on some of the technologies for pulling the information together. Dr.

Kerr suggested that his own experiences at other institutions provided a background in the area and allow him to bring some guidance to areas in which action may be taken.

Dr. Kerr has been at Regional Community College for “just under a year.” He is a peer reviewer for the PEAQ program of the Higher Learning Commission and has been involved in assessment visits to other campuses. He contends that assessment of learning at Regional is very “bureaucracy-centered as opposed to improvement-centered.” In the two or three years prior to his coming, administrative turnover may have allowed some things to fall apart. He has been trying to understand where the institution is and provide his perspective based on his observations. He believes that a lot of turnover and passing assessment of learning around to various individuals creates a situation where “you never get on a track because you are constantly trying to decide to go on another journey.” Consequently, “nobody has a very good vision of what they are trying to accomplish.” He is trying to help Regional see a “bigger picture” by talking about assessment as being a “big global assessment of general education.” He believes that the institution is still concerned about “jumping through the hoops for accreditation” and he wants to make sure specific courses are accomplishing what they are designed to accomplish.

Although Dr. Kerr believes that being in a rural setting has little impact on their assessment-of-learning program, he indicated that being rural allows an institution to “hold off change a little bit longer.” He stated that there “aren’t as many eyes looking at you and you are not as big,” and as a result, there is a tendency to slow down. It is “easier to hide” progress and improvements.

Dr. Kerr’s management style tends to be very open. He is interested in working with people as a group. He likes to share information and indicated that he is not much of an autocrat.

He believes that “much of the impetus for their assessment-of-learning program, whether real or imagined, has come from requirements of the Higher Learning Commission.” This has fostered a strong mentality among members of the assessment committee that assessment of learning is all about trying to “guess what they want and then doing it.” He believes that to some degree this impetus is causing Regional to continue with a “twisted process.”

Dr. Kerr questions whether Regional Community College has formal guidelines for determining the amount of money to budget for assessment of learning. He admits that even the budget process is still a fairly informal process. Much of this Dr. Kerr attributes to administrative turnover. Regional has had turnover at the presidential as well as the CAO level.

Individual faculty members at Regional tend not to have a complete vision of what assessment is, according to Dr. Kerr. He suggested it has been largely the assessment committee that is “running with the show,” and they are trying to stay tied to faculty development efforts. He stated that these efforts have been “less than satisfactory.” Some discussion with committee members reveals a need for strategic planning with regard to faculty development to avoid the shorter range “micro parts.” He has suggested to his committee that the institution needs successes to use as examples rather than instruction on how to fill out forms. According to Dr. Kerr, the latter attitude contributes to a bureaucratic process instead of an improvement of learning process. Part-time faculty members are not involved in the assessment-of-learning program.

Although Dr. Kerr doesn’t know if the exclusion of assessment-of-learning language in their mission statement has affected their assessment-of-learning program, he suggested that because the president keeps the mission statement in front of people it may have some effect. He stated that if assessment-of-learning language were a more obvious element, they could end up

with more discussion and more expectations for measuring learning, assuring that learning is occurring.

Dr. Kerr stated that reaccreditation as an AQIP institution has been helpful. He suggested that if they were a PEAQ institution they would have an “eight-year period of relaxation followed by two years of catch up.” Being an AQIP institution keeps things in front of them. As a result, he admitted that they need to be making progress. He believes that if the institution were not an AQIP institution and continually pushing the “quality envelope,” it would be a lot more laissez-faire regarding assessment.

Dr. Kerr indicated that State Community College’s assessment plan was drawn up by an administrator simply to meet a bureaucratic deadline. He stated that this “probably would not be the kind of action that is going to give us anything significant as far as results.” Dr. Kerr sums up their assessment plan as one that was designed to get them through a Higher Learning Commission visit. “The plan in and of itself only is useful if somebody actually does it [and] then figures out whether the plan is effective,” Dr. Kerr stated.

Dr. Childs, Area Community College

Area Community College is a rural community college with less than 200 full-time undergraduate students. The institution is PEAQ accredited. The CEO has been in that position for 21 or more years. The CAO has been in her current position for five years or less. Based on self-reporting by the CAO, assessment-of-learning language is included in the institution’s mission statement. The institution budgets 5% or less of its general fund for assessment of learning, and decisions affecting their assessment-of-learning program come from the top-down.

Dr. Childs indicated that as Vice President of Instruction, she is the person who most influences the operation of Area Community College’s assessment-of-learning program. She

attributed her experience with AQIP and an assessment project at another community college as helping her to obtain the current role. She suggested that the following additional qualities and characteristics were also instrumental:

- theoretical knowledge of assessment
- practical application and experiences with assessment
- the dynamics of working with assessment amongst faculty, programs, and administration
- patience and persistence
- valuing student learning

She defined assessment as being “sort of a map of student learning, wanting to know about progress in student learning rather than just to have it be an abstract concept.” An important characteristic of the CEO, she said, is a commitment to quality, particularly pursuing quality for the institution and academic environment. She indicated that the CEO must have a “real interest in students succeeding and being well prepared” when they leave the institution.

Dr. Childs is not sure that the institution’s rural location affects assessment of learning, but whether an institution does or doesn’t do something to enhance learning may be more obvious because of fewer students. She claimed, “There is more personal knowledge of each student’s progress,” and suggested that “the personal impact of learning or not learning” is more apparent. Dr. Childs said that this made it more important to have “assessment of student learning working to its potential.”

Dr. Childs reported her management style as collaborative—a relationship-oriented engagement. She stated that there are “differences in contribution capabilities, and as long as everyone is contributing and engaged,” everyone makes progress.

The impetus for assessment of learning at Area Community College, Dr. Childs stated, comes from external accountability and an internal curiosity. She said that external accountability, whether federal or state, is a factor and that accountability is a “strong motivator for moving institutions to take a closer look at Assessment of Learning.” These external entities are requiring colleges to tell their story: “Can they articulate what is being done in measurable terms?” External accountability makes a difference in how the academy talks about, looks at, discusses, and considers courses and programs. Dr. Childs said that there is a tendency to “hone” the discussion and encourage working on curriculum. She admitted that it is difficult to have a discussion on assessment without having a discussion about curriculum. Dr. Childs claimed that this is a valuable connection, and that the internal curiosity and reflection from within the academy could be more casual and relaxed if they were the only factors driving the effort.

With the exception of supporting more developmental testing, Dr. Childs is not aware of new dollars being directed into assessment. She viewed this as a dilemma. Assessment at Area Community College has essentially been “tacked onto what educators are already doing. It’s just another assignment. You are developing, modifying curriculum – why aren’t you doing assessment? You are also doing program review, so why don’t you tie assessment exercises to program review?” She stated that “educational institutions have grasped the magnitude of the workload that completing assessment requires—gathering the data, having the systems in place, the people in place, the resources in place to analyze and report on assessment of student learning.”

Dr. Childs indicated that faculty members are repeatedly involved in assessment of learning at all levels. “Whether it’s a discussion on program adjustments, enhancing program requirements, or introducing a new course, or preparing a program review— they are involved.”

Courses come through a curriculum committee and assessment is part of the discussion as the course is developed. She believes that assessment is “there with faculty included in everything they do—whether it be in a formal or informal manner.” Part-time faculty members are being introduced to the assessment process. Dr. Childs refers to this as the next layer for assessing student learning. It is her intent to start some orientation programs that include part-time faculty, where she will introduce the concept of assessing outcomes. Part-time faculty will be expected to carry out the same assessments and introduce assessment activities. According to Dr. Childs, educational components need to be in place to weave adjunct faculty into the next phase of assessment.

Dr. Childs stated that Area Community College includes assessment-of-learning language in their mission statement. She indicated that educators have been including assessment language in mission and vision statements for some time. Therefore, she said that assessment is something that is pretty easy to talk about. “It’s actively engaging assessment that is a challenge.” Determining how to activate assessment of student learning is where the patience and persistence comes in. When working with the faculty and staff, measuring learning comes alive, Dr. Childs affirmed.

Dr. Childs pointed out that the PEAQ process has focused on the structure of assessment of student learning. She indicated that the Higher Learning Commission keeps asking questions and keeps pushing them to go beyond just words:

- Can you tell us your story of assessment?
- Are you making progress?
- How are you doing it?

She indicated that to answer PEAQ questions, they have to keep coming back to that same set of questions and hoping that a little bit of progress is made every time. “The challenge for PEAQ institutions is the long span between accreditation visits.”

Dr. Childs said that faculty believe in assessment of learning and are willing to work to improve assessment but that translating it into documents to support what is being done is frustrating. “I think it is an additional layer of documentation that—without extra people to help get the process done—makes it a slow process to get in place.” Dr. Childs explained the documentation in terms of

- determining criteria
- developing rubrics
- developing check lists
- developing pretests and posttests
- selecting third party certification or licensure exams

Gathering up those results, sitting with colleagues and discussing those results, and the amount of time and paperwork to get analysis accomplished—that is what is overwhelming to many of them. One must try to break assessment into small steps and make progress slowly and steadily. Although Dr. Childs did not sense any great resistance, she thought that it was just a matter of where the extra time came from. This is where patience and persistence is important, according to Dr. Childs.

Dr. Avers, Western Community College

Western Community College is a rural community college with just over 1000 full-time undergraduate students. The institution is AQIP accredited. The CEO and CAO have been in their respective positions for five years or less. Based on self-reporting by the CAO, there is no

assessment-of-learning language in the institution's mission statement. The institution budgets 5% or less of its general fund for assessment of learning, and decisions affecting their assessment-of-learning program come from the bottom-up.

The person who has the most influence on the operation of Western Community College's assessment-of-learning program is the Vice President of Academic Affairs. Mr. Avers indicated he is relatively new to this position, having served for only two years. He expressed that just being in a position to oversee the instructional focus of the institution is important. He stated that concern with student learning outcomes and a strong desire to see students succeed are important qualities that affect the institution's assessment-of-learning program.

Although Mr. Avers has been in his current position for only two years, he suggested that 35 years of instructional tenure has given him a fair amount of institutional history. He served as interim vice president for two years prior to taking the position. He commented that some may see his tenure as having baggage. He conceded that he is quite familiar with the operation and history of the institution and how it has developed over the years. He said his years as a classroom teacher allows him to bring an instructional focus and concern with student success to the position.

The CEO at Western Community College is new, entering his third year. Mr. Avers suggested that the administrative characteristics or qualities associated with the CEO's tenure that have contributed to the institution's assessment-of-learning program are interests in change and in data-driven decision making. Mr. Avers commented that Western's assessment program has been in place over the years and was first implemented to meet reaccreditation standards. He admitted that it was something they did "just to go through the motions." With the new president Mr. Avers commented that the college is a little more conscientious about what it takes to do

things, that data is not just accumulated for the sake of data, and that the faculty and administration actually examine that data for the purpose of assessment. He said that the new president has a genuine concern in looking at information and using it as a springboard for institutional and instructional improvement and for student learning.

Mr. Avers was very brief when addressing the issue of rural setting and his management style. He indicated that Western's location in a rural setting was not a factor in affecting their assessment-of-learning program. He described his management style as consensus building and deliberative.

Mr. Avers said the initial impetus for their assessment-of-learning program came out of their reaccreditation efforts over ten years ago. He indicated that it had become obvious that assessment of learning was an important part of the accreditation process. As a result of going through the last ten-year accreditation, they went "through the motions" of creating an assessment-of-learning program. With the new president the institution adopted the AQIP reaccreditation process. He recognized that this process focuses on continuous improvement. For Mr. Avers the AQIP process has brought the whole assessment effort into focus, maybe revitalizing what they have been doing. He admitted that some of the things they have been doing "haven't been half bad." Some efforts have continued on a regular basis and others have "fallen by the wayside." Mr. Avers suggested that they "just need to pick up the pieces and revitalize that." He said that being an AQIP institution has been helpful in terms of helping them see the need to make effective use of the process: "Not just gather the information, but number one, make sure the information gathered is meaningful, and ... make sure it is used meaningfully."

No specific guidelines are in place to determine the percentage of the budget that is spent on assessment of learning. Mr. Avers indicated that at Western the budget is developed year-by-year, based on what is necessary to accomplish the budgetary demands. This has been an informal process; but with the AQIP review process, it may become a little more systematic. Western Community College traditionally has not set aside specific pools of money for the assessment process.

Mr. Avers reviewed some history of their assessment program. He indicated that it was the mid '90's when they launched their current assessment-of-learning program. At the time it incorporated both general institutional assessment and student learning outcomes. Faculty members were involved in identifying nine broad assessment areas that included reasoning, logic, speaking, and writing. Once these nine areas were identified, a steering committee was appointed to oversee each of the areas, with all faculty members serving on at least one of committees. As a result, faculty members were involved from the beginning. Mr. Avers explained that the process was supposed to continue as a faculty-driven process, but "institutional inertia kind of swept this by the wayside," resulting in some areas being somewhat active while others went "through the motions" and let things slide as far as collecting information and using that information to actually improve the learning process. Areas that continued were writing, math, and speaking. Vocational programs at Western all have an assessment matrix and an assessment rubric. Graduates of the programs are assessed in terms of learning outcomes for each area.

Part-time faculty members have been engaged in these assessment activities. He indicated that participation by adjunct faculty is not required, but some do tend to assume an active role and are more involved in some of these efforts. One of Mr. Avers's goals is to try and include

adjunct/part-time faculty as much as possible in everything that is done. It is his hope to provide opportunities for participation “up and down the institution regardless of what kind of activity or endeavor it happens to be.” However, part-time faculty involvement so far has been “hit and miss.”

Mr. Avers was not sure that the exclusion of assessment-of-learning language in the institution’s mission statement has made a recognizable difference in their assessment-of-learning program. He indicated that the new president has biannually involved all employees in a collaborative process brainstorming institutional goals, objectives, and strategies. Senior staff have taken this feedback and revised the vision and strategy statements. Mr. Avers stated that Western is becoming more focused on implementing institutional plans and making things happen.

Mr. Avers said that their participation in the AQIP program has made them more aware of the assessment-of-learning process. Although Western has an assessment-of-learning plan, assessment has not been done systematically and data have not been used to guide planning or address learning outcomes. Mr. Avers reported that the college is now an AQIP-accredited institution which has helped build a mindset that will cause them to look at assessment-of-learning issues more “concretely.” For example, as a part of the AQIP process, the institution has identified a specific project designed to improve their developmental studies program. This has been an attempt to help their developmental students to be “more successful down the road.”

Mr. Avers reiterated that Western Community College is “going back to the drawing board” in an attempt to get their assessment program “back up to speed.” One of the institution’s recent AQIP projects was to redesign and redefine their governance process. Out of this came an

assessment committee that reports to the faculty senate. Mr. Avers said that Western faculty and administrators “are serious about reestablishing their assessment program.”

Mr. Berg, Sylvan Community College

Sylvan Community College is a rural community college with about 1,100 full-time undergraduate students and is accredited through the PEAQ program by the Higher Learning Commission. The CEO has been in that position for five years or less, while the CAO has been in his current position for 6 to 10 years. Based on self-reporting by the CAO, assessment-of-learning language is included in the institution’s mission statement. The institution budgets 5% or less of its general fund for assessment of learning, and decisions affecting their assessment-of-learning program come from the bottom-up.

At Sylvan Community College the Director of Academic Assessment is the person with the most influence on the operation of their assessment-of-learning program, according to Mr. Berg. That person has worked as a faculty member and student advisor and has been the college’s International Student Advisor. The director has been with the college for about 13 or 14 years and has taken on academic assessment as a “personal thing.” For several years he has attended national conferences on assessment such as the Higher Learning Commission’s conference. Mr. Berg believes that the director’s personal qualities that affect the assessment-of-learning program are good rapport with the faculty and open-mindedness, as well as being energetic, hardworking, and dedicated to the position.

Mr. Berg reported that his rapport with the faculty has been the most beneficial trait that he has been able to bring to the table to get the “assessment process spearheaded on campus.” He indicated that he did not have to force the issue with the assessment process. He said he has been able to relate to faculty what needs to be done and why it needs to be done, and has been

successful in getting them to “step up and help us with this process.” He feels that faculty respond because they respect him and they know he’s “doing what’s right for the institution” and not just assigning busy work.

Mr. Berg stated that the CEO’s administrative experience with assessment at other institutions has contributed to their assessment-of-learning program. Their CEO has supported the assessment process with financial resources and has the knowledge of how much money it takes to do it right. Mr. Berg said that it hasn’t been a struggle to put together a program and make sure it’s working. He indicated that people are going to conferences to increase their knowledge of assessment of learning, and he stated that their assessment-of-learning program has benefited from the background and knowledge of the current president. Mr. Berg said the president knows what it takes to run a quality program.

Mr. Berg believes that their rural setting may have both a negative and positive impact on their assessment-of-learning program. Being in a rural setting, travel to conferences is more difficult and more costly. However, he also stated that sometimes in a rural setting you “tend to have students who are more focused on learning and ... have a higher success rate.” He indicated that Sylvan Community College has a higher student retention rate from fall to fall than the national average. This, he said, is evidence that being in a rural setting is more beneficial. He concluded that the results of higher retention are more completers and students who do better on assessment tests.

Mr. Berg identified his management style as someone who is “somewhat hands off,” but who still provides direction, allowing people to have input. He suggested that this allows him to “basically back off and let them get it going.” He indicated the need to lay out an expectation and facilitate meetings to help people meet those expectations. He suggested that one is allowed to

take his/her ideas and is empowered to run a project. He jokingly said, “I hire people to get the job done. If I have to go do your job for you then I don’t need you.” Mr. Berg reported that empowerment is important to get people to take care of problems. Although he helps by providing guidance and advice, he has allowed subordinates to have that “final input in actually making it happen.”

Mr. Berg indicated that a hired consultant was instrumental in redefining the direction and vision of their assessment-of-learning program. The consultant was a former employee who had an interest in assessment of learning and experience with the Higher Learning Commission. Mr. Berg explained that the consultant was a retiree of Sylvan Community College and had worked at other institutions, helping establish and refine their assessment-of-learning programs. Mr. Berg indicated that they were struggling with pretesting and post-testing and with a general education examination that had been developed in-house. Through the consultant’s efforts faculty were brought back on board with the assessment process.

According to Mr. Berg, upper administration (the president and three vice presidents) determine the assessment-of-learning budget. A percentage of the total faculty travel budget is used for the faculty to attend national conferences or regional conferences, travel expenses, and hotel expenses. Recently, this figure was doubled and identified for their assessment-of-learning program. In addition to travel and conference expenses these funds cover a salary for the part-time consultant. Salary for a full-time assessment person, instructional supplies, assessment software, test materials, and testing fees are also included in the budget. He anticipated that the amount spent on assessment will increase.

Faculty at Sylvan Community College use rubrics to collect data on their individual classes and report data to division chairs at the end of the semester. Division chairs summarize

these data to the respective deans. These data are then summarized into a final report that comes back to Mr. Berg's office. Consequently, faculty members are involved from the ground level. The assessment team, dubbed the "A Team," is made up of faculty members. This level of involvement provides faculty review of the assessment process as well as student data. This prepares faculty for input into future changes to the process.

Mr. Berg said that 98% of the faculty "bought into" assessment of learning once the consultant was hired. Although he indicated he was surprised at some of the faculty members who "stepped up," there were still a few faculty members who are being "dragged along." Mr. Berg indicated that information about the assessment-of-learning program is also gathered informally and used to make adjustments to the process. He stated that if improving learning is not the goal of an assessment-of-learning program, then formal assessment shouldn't be done. It shouldn't be used just to satisfy accreditation or as an evaluation of a faculty member. Mr. Berg admitted that for several years they were not doing a very good job of using data for follow-through with faculty. He indicated that this is an area where improvement is being made. He reported that if data are not coming back to the faculty, then adjustments need to be made to the process to improve learning. Otherwise, it is a wasted process. Mr. Berg indicated that part-time faculty members are involved.

Assessment language is included in the Sylvan Community College's mission statement. Mr. Berg stated that he is not sure that the inclusion of assessment-of-learning language in the institution's mission statement has had any effect on its assessment-of-learning program. The only thing it might have done is convince faculty that it is something to take seriously.

Although Mr. Berg stated that being a PEAQ institution has influenced them to make slight adjustments to meet accreditation guidelines, he also said that being a PEAQ institution

may have had a negative impact on their institution's assessment-of-learning program. Sylvan's assessment program began in 1994 with a North Central team visit. After receiving a ten-year reaccreditation without stipulations, everyone became complacent. Some believed someone else would take care of it, resulting in a lack of emphasis on assessment of learning. Mr. Berg said that in about 2000 when the new president came, they were informed that they were not doing a good enough job, but it was too late. Short preparation time for a 2004 visit resulted in a report that revealed gaps in assessment data from 1994 to 2000. Adjustments were made to their program as a result of the accreditation process and by going to annual Higher Learning Commission meetings and listening. Adjustments have been made to the program based on what other institutions were doing, on faculty input, and on information from the Higher Learning Commission visiting team.

Mr. Berg stated that AQIP institutions that continually work on improvement projects have a constant reminder of the importance of assessment. As a "PEAQ school, if you receive a ten-year reaccreditation and no stipulations, then you may drop the ball on it, and/or your faculty or staff may lose the [sic] interest in that program." Although Mr. Berg said that they are paying the price for this action by having a focus visit from the Higher Learning Commission, their faculty members have begun to take the process seriously. He said it has helped them improve.

Dr. Paxton, Langston Community College

Langston Community College is an urban community college with less than 100 full-time undergraduate students. The institution is accredited through the PEAQ program by the Higher Learning Commission. The CEO has been in that position for 5 to 10 years. The CAO has been in his current position for five years or less. Based on self-reporting by the CAO, there is no assessment-of-learning language in the institution's mission statement. The institution budgets

5% or less of its general fund for assessment of learning, and decisions affecting their assessment-of-learning program come from the bottom-up.

Dr. Paxton reported that, although he has only been at Langston for a few months, he has the most influence on their assessment-of-learning program. He also suggested that they are in a “state of transition” and are “still trying to sort each other out.” He indicated that influence on the assessment-of-learning program may also come from different institutional levels: The registrar administers the Compass test at the general education level, division chairs have the most influence at the program level, and individual instructors have the most influence at the course level.

Dr. Paxton said that the qualities that affect their assessment-of-learning program vary from level to level and person to person. He suggested that an “individual’s commitment to assessment” is going to be a part of it. He indicated that expertise and background in assessment has a lot to do with the qualities that affect the program. He indicated that “like most community colleges, we don’t have a lot of folks who come from a trained educational background. They are more discipline oriented. We do have a number of our adjuncts who are or have been public school teachers that do have some background.”

When addressing the question of personal administrative characteristics or qualities that have contributed to the institution’s assessment-of-learning program, Dr. Paxton explained that his experience at previous institutions and public community colleges was a major factor. He said that he tries to be as inclusive as possible, being collaborative in his discussion about assessment and the direction the institution needs to go.

The president of Langston Community College is also a product of public community colleges. Dr. Paxton stated that the president’s experience has been helpful in addressing

assessment issues. He emphasized that Langston says it's a community college, but technically it is a "post-secondary, two-year private institution," so this college does not fit the mold of most public community colleges.

Dr. Paxton stated the college's urban setting has not had much effect on their assessment-of-learning program. He suggested that their "clientele" is more of an issue than their setting. According to Dr. Paxton, the institution has a lot of immigrants. A large number of students are "under prepared" and from a "lower social economic background." He is unsure whether this is attributed to an urban environment. Dr. Paxton suggested that student learning expectation has some impact on how the assessment-of-learning program is set up. This may cause Langston personnel to "be a little bit more forgiving ...than a more comprehensive institution...."

Dr. Paxton indicated that his management style is collaborative. He tries to work with people and maintain patience when making changes. He said he has found that usually "a unilateral, instantaneous change does not last very long."

When confronted with the issue of "from where does impetus come" for their assessment-of-learning program, Dr. Paxton indicated that they are not at the level that they desire, but that the institution has been working on it. He stated that

...the emphasis has been in general an understanding that we need to try to be as good an institution as we can be and that we owe our stakeholders some measure of creditability and that includes students, community, business industries, and receiving institutions.

Dr. Paxton indicated that currently Langston Community College is accredited through the PEAQ program, but that the college is looking at AQIP. He stated that conversations about AQIP are helping faculty and administration appreciate that they are able to show they are doing what they say they do.

Dr. Paxton stated that Langston does not have guidelines to determine the percentage of their budget spent on assessment of learning. He said the administration identifies what is needed and makes it available. He said that the registrar is the primary person who keeps track of what is spent on assessment.

Langston Community College has only six full-time faculty members and a “preponderance of adjunct.” Dr. Paxton explained that assessment of learning is primarily a full-time faculty issue. Other than individual course assessment, part-time faculty members are not involved. He indicated that most of the activity at this point is in the form of conversation about assessment. He indicated that the college’s faculty members have started having monthly meetings, called Faculty Forums, which include discussions on assessment. A question in a recent forum was: “How do you assess course work in particular?” He indicated that they chose to start at the course level because it is a level that most people can appreciate. Dr. Paxton indicated that they are starting to look at goals and objectives that need to be assessed at the programmatic level. He reiterated the fact that they are really at the conversation level about assessment of learning.

Dr. Paxton stated that the exclusion of assessment-of-learning language from the college’s mission statement has had a fairly significant impact. He thinks that faculty and staff have great appreciation for their primary clientele, allowing them to focus on “helping folks who need extra help.” He’s not sure that there has been equal appreciation for standards that “assessment has tried to evaluate.”

Dr. Paxton is unsure but thinks the institution’s assessment plan was approved several years ago. Langston is accredited through the PEAQ program of the Higher Learning Commission. He said that since they are not in the AQIP program the institution has had a lax

approach to assessment of learning. He indicated that this is typical of his experiences with most institutions “unless they have a hot coal that is keeping it going.” Dr. Paxton admitted that Langston Community College has a lot of work to do. Currently, faculty and administration are building consensus regarding the need to do a better job. Dr. Paxton indicated that positive changes will occur.

Thematic Patterns

Thematic patterns (Appendices O-X) were identified from qualitative interview data. That data was coded to identify themes (words or short phrases) by category, based on qualitative questions found in Appendix K. Themes derived for these data follow:

1. Location: Impact from Other Sources and Location Impact.
2. Accreditation Status: Internalizing the Assessment Process and Perception of AQIP.
3. Impetus for Assessment: External Forces, Internal Forces, and Institutional Response.
4. CEO Tenure: Student Learning Advocacy and Support, Leadership Style and Personal Qualities, and Assessment Knowledge and Experience.
5. CAO Tenure: Interpersonal Skills and Personal Qualities; Commitment to Student Learning; and Assessment Training, Knowledge, and Experience.
6. CAO Management Style: Expectations/Incentives and Management Style.
7. Person with Most Influence on Assessment of Learning Program: Person with Most Influence, Faculty Relations, Personal Qualities, Instructional Knowledge and Experience, and Assessment Knowledge and Experience.
8. Faculty Involvement: Faculty Involvement and Data-Driven Improvements.
9. Language in Mission Statement: Mission Language and Influence on Assessment.

10. Budget Guidelines: Who Makes Assessment Budget, Process and Guidelines, and Budget Use.

From these themes came the following five meta-themes. These were obtained by examining the charted themes (Appendices O-X) for traits that led to successful assessment-of-learning programs as perceived by participating community college CAOs.

Meta-Themes

Five meta-themes emerged from these categorical data, relating to influence on assessment-of-learning programs that CAOs perceive as successful.

1. Perceived successful assessment-of-learning programs are internalized.
 - a. All faculty members, full and part-time, are involved in all aspects of assessment.
 - b. Continuous data collection and reporting occur at least annually.
 - c. Data-driven improvements are made to student learning on a continuous basis.
 - d. Total staff enthusiasm with the whole process is demonstrated.
2. Perceived successful assessment-of-learning programs are most often influenced by an administrator, usually the CAO. The leader most often:
 - a. Has a passion for student learning
 - b. Has the ability to earn and maintain faculty rapport, trust, and credibility
 - c. Demonstrates patience and persistence
 - d. Feels an urgent desire to comply with accreditation demands
 - e. Is committed to assessment-of-learning research
 - f. Possesses in-depth assessment knowledge and experience beyond the conference level

- g. Prefers a participatory, collaborative, and accessible management style
- 3. Perceived successful assessment-of-learning programs have faculty members who:
 - a. Are willing to take risks
 - b. Are given autonomy
 - c. Receive remuneration
 - d. Receive recognition or other intangible incentives
- 4. Perceived successful assessment-of-learning programs have institutional support in the form of money budgeted for:
 - a. Assessment tests
 - b. Assessment academic and technology programs
 - c. Faculty assessment initiatives
 - d. Faculty assessment development: travel and faculty compensation
 - i. For training
 - ii. For measurement development
- 5. Perceived successful assessment-of-learning programs most often are guided by a mission statement that includes assessment-of-learning language or with related terms such as “quality” or “student learning.” The mission statement:
 - a. Serves as a talking point
 - b. Heightens awareness of the assessment program
 - c. Demonstrates that the administration is serious about assessment

Once the assessment plan is in place, however, the driving force tends to move from an externalization to an internalization of the process. The researcher noted that those institutions using the PEAQ method also used annual performance objectives and kept assessment practices

going continuously—much like institutions that were AQIP-accredited. Those institutions that have not yet internalized the assessment process, whether PEAQ- or AQIP-accredited, are more lax between Higher Learning Commission visits and are perceived by the institutions’ leaders as not as successful. Institutions that are not at this level of implementation tend to lack the “assessment vision” and have not been far enough through the assessment cycle to make the connection between outcomes and assessment. For example, low-scoring CAOs said nothing about data follow-up. Perceived successful assessment-of-learning programs have annual continuous improvement plans which are internalized, have both committed administrative and faculty leadership, and have institutional support in both money for assessment and assessment language in their mission statements. Likewise, institutions that are late getting into student learning assessment are playing a not-so-successful game of “catch-up.”

Summary

The quantitative portion of this study found that the ASLPS mean score for CAOs from community colleges in the Higher Learning Commission region that were PEAQ accredited were significantly higher than the mean scores of CAOs from community colleges that were AQIP accredited. Comparisons of AQIP and PEAQ accreditation on the 17 items of the ASLPS survey yielded three items with statistically significant differences. PEAQ institutions yielded higher mean scores than AQIP institutions on these items. PEAQ institutions more frequently included assessment-of-learning language in their mission statements than AQIP institutions. Institutions that included assessment language in their mission statements had significantly higher means on the ASLPS survey than institutions that excluded assessment language. Comparisons of the 17 item responses of the ASLPS survey yielded three items that were significantly higher in institutions that included assessment language.

The qualitative portion of this study used personal interviews to provide a better understanding of the variables and to gather data on the effects of the variables suggested in the qualitative research questions on assessment-of-learning programs. These interview data were coded by two readers, independently and then organized into Thematic Patterns that allowed five of the highest ASLPS scoring CAOs' comments to be compared to five of the lowest. Five meta-themes emerged from these data. Although accreditation requirements tend to be the driving force for assessment-of-learning programs, it is the CAOs with programs that have had a complete, long-term experience with implementation of the assessment program that express a high level of perceived success on the ASLPS survey. Perceived successful assessment-of-learning programs, according to meta-themes derived from the qualitative data in this study, are internalized, have committed administrative and faculty leadership, and have institutional support in the form of money for assessment and assessment-of-learning language in their mission statement. These programs are at a point where data are being used to make decisions about teaching, learning, and the process itself. If both faculty and the administration are committed to assessment and if both part- and full-time faculty are involved in the assessment process, the resulting program should have at least a continuous improvement plan that comes full circle, showing noticeable improvement in student learning. Institutions that have not reached this level of implementation tend to lack the "assessment vision" and have not been far enough through the assessment cycle to make the connection between outcomes and assessment. Likewise, those institutions who are just now talking about assessment are playing a not-so-successful game of "catch-up."

CHAPTER V:

RESULTS

Introduction

Quantitative and qualitative data were taken together to explore institutional dynamics, administrative qualities and characteristics, and assessment-of-learning program support of community colleges in the Higher Learning Commission region. The research was conducted according to the Kansas State University IRB policy. What follows is a discussion of these research findings in light of eight guiding questions:

1. Is there a difference between the perceived level of success of community college assessment programs and the type (urban/rural) of institution? If so, what is the nature of that difference?
2. Is there a difference between the perceived level of success of community college assessment programs and the accreditation method (AQIP or PEAQ) of the institution? If so, what is the nature of that difference?
3. Is there a difference between the perceived level of success of community college assessment-of-learning programs and an institution's CEO's tenure? If so, what is the nature of that difference?
4. Is there a difference between the perceived level of success of community college assessment-of-learning programs and an institution's CAOs tenure? If so, what is the nature of that difference?
5. Is there a difference between the perceived level of success of community college assessment-of-learning programs and an institution's decision-making practice (top-down/bottom-up). If so, what is the nature of that difference?

6. Is there a difference between the perceived level of success of community college assessment-of-learning programs and an institution's mission emphasis? If so, what is the nature of that difference?
7. Is there a difference between the perceived level of success of community college assessment-of-learning programs and the percentage of general fund money spent on assessment of learning? If so, what is the nature of that difference?
8. What administrative or institutional constructs or phenomena are consistent among institutions with perceived successful assessment-of-learning programs and how do they contribute to program success, as measured by qualitative interviews of selected institutions?

Restatement of the Problem

This researcher sought to address institutional dynamics, administrative qualities and characteristics, and program support of assessment-of-learning programs that successfully reflect the Higher Learning Commission's expectations for accreditation. Assessment-of-learning program success is inconsistent among community colleges across the country (Banta, 1994; Ewell, 1988; Palmer, 1994), which may be attributed to changing institutional definitions of assessment as a result of institutional dynamics, administrative qualities and characteristics, and support for assessment-of-learning programs. Determining the influence of these factors toward successful assessment programs will offer administrators and planning teams a tool toward success at their own institutions.

Limitations of the Study

As stated in chapter I, the limitations of this study were:

1. The Higher Learning Commission region was the focus of this study.

2. Private two-year, public two-year “colleges” (not defined as community colleges), and two-year technical colleges were not included.

This study purposively limited the sample/population to the Higher Learning Commission region. This sample was appropriate as the region shared the same general criteria for assessment-of-learning programs. Had all six regional accrediting agencies been considered, the methodology would have changed and the results may have been different.

Although this study was designed to explore assessment-of-learning programs in “community colleges,” one CAO indicated in the qualitative interview that his institution was a “post-secondary, two year private institution.” While this institution is subject to the same accreditation requirements there could be a difference in mission that may have affected responses to the “Mission Language” question.

The on-line survey response of 47.7% may have improved had a technical problem not occurred with the e-mail link. The problem was corrected but it is unclear how many CAOs failed to respond as a result. Additionally, the perceived overload of CAOs may have contributed to non-response.

The qualitative sample was designed to explore differences in the highest and lowest scores of perceived assessment-of-learning success. As a result, 9 of 10 CAOs interviewed were from rural institutions. Given that rural institutions represented 62.7% of the respondents, a better representation may have been drawn from a random sampling of responding institutions.

Summary of Research Methods

A mixed-method design was used in this study: Quantitative research was conducted, using the Assessment-of-Student-Learning Program Success (ASLPS) survey, developed by the researcher and based on Huba & Freed’s (2000) “Key Questions to Consider When Establishing

or Evaluating an Assessment Program,” (pp. 68-75); and qualitative research was conducted through telephone interviews. Both research methods were used to examine the differences in institutional dynamics, administrative qualities and characteristics, and support for assessment-of-learning programs on perceived successful community college assessment-of-learning programs in the Higher Learning Commission region. The ASLPS survey and telephone interviews were preceded by a pilot study, which also used both quantitative and qualitative measures. The pilot survey served two purposes: First, to test the validity of the ASLPS survey, and second, to finalize the interview protocol.

Eighty-eight CAOs responded to the ASLPS on-line survey. Eighty-three responses were deemed usable. The surveys were submitted between March 12, 2007, and April 17, 2007. From this group five of the highest scoring CAOs and five of the lowest scoring institutions’ CAOs were selected for twenty-minute personal telephone interviews held between May 29, 2007, and June 4, 2007.

The quantitative data were analyzed using two-tailed *t* tests for unequal variance, ANOVA for multi-layered variables, comparisons for unequal variance of ASLPS items, and crosstab analyses for comparing two variables. Qualitative data was taken from personal interviews, coded independently by two individuals, and organized into Thematic Patterns (Appendices O-X). From these patterns, five meta-themes emerged.

Discussion of Findings

The first seven research questions in this study were examined quantitatively. Of these questions, two produced statistical significance. The independent variables were then used to explore item response differences. These questions also suggested the interview protocol used to

answer question eight, which was explored through interviews to obtain richer data on variables explored in the quantitative research.

Quantitative Findings

The quantitative portion of this research found two independent variables with statistically significant differences in composite scores: “Accreditaton Method,” and “Mission Language.” *T*-test comparisons found three statistically significant items each. What follows is a discussion of these findings.

Question Two: *Is there a difference between the perceived level of success of community college assessment programs and the accreditation method (AQIP or PEAQ) of the institution? If so, what is the nature of that difference?* This research revealed that CAOs from institutions that were PEAQ accredited indicated that their assessment-of-learning programs were at a higher level of success than those CAOs from AQIP-accredited institutions. Furthermore, an analysis of individual items revealed that CAOs from PEAQ-accredited institutions were more likely to have assessment of learning programs based on a conceptual framework that explained relationships among teaching, curriculum, learning, and assessment at the institution. Further, PEAQ institutions tended to base assessment on data gathered from multiple measures, and PEAQ institutions were more likely to have institution-wide support for assessment-of-learning programs.

Question Six: *Is there a difference between the perceived level of success of community college assessment-of-learning programs and an institution’s mission emphasis? If so, what is the nature of that difference?* An analysis of this question revealed that institutions that included assessment language in their mission statement were perceived by CAOs to be more successful than those institutions that excluded such language. This is consistent with Dugan and Hernon’s

(2006) suggestion that linking assessment outcomes to mission focuses “on student learning.”

(p.1). Assessment was a part of a larger set of conditions that promoted change at the institution, according to CAOs who believed their programs were more successful. As one might expect, assessment flowed from the institution’s mission and the program itself was regularly evaluated.

Qualitative Findings

The qualitative portion of this study explored Question Eight, which states: *What administrative or institutional constructs or phenomena are consistent among institutions with perceived successful assessment-of-learning programs and how do they contribute to program success, as measured by qualitative interviews of selected institutions?* Data from this research yielded five meta-themes based on personal interviews, independently categorized and coded into thematic patterns by two reviewers. The interviews were conducted with ten CAOs from five high-scoring and five low-scoring institutions. A more complete discussion of the interaction between quantitative and qualitative data follows.

Personal interviews from the qualitative research offered important meta-themes that were especially helpful in giving a more in-depth view of the characteristics of perceived successful assessment programs. The meta-themes include internalization, the person most influential to the assessment-of-learning program and his or her qualities and characteristics, faculty involvement, and monetary and mission statement support. Following is a discussion of these meta-themes, describing institutions with perceived successful assessment-of-learning programs.

Among the programs perceived to be more successful, the initial impetus for assessment of learning was reported as coming most often from the Higher Learning Commission. Once an assessment plan was implemented and assessment-of-learning decisions became data-driven, the

impetus became more internalized. All full- and part-time faculty members were reportedly involved in all aspects of assessment, including continuous data collection and outcomes reporting, as well as in making decisions for improvements to both classroom learning and the assessment process. CAOs reported that all persons at such institutions were noticeably enthusiastic with the whole assessment-of-learning process.

Generally, the CAOs that believed their assessment-of-learning programs were most successful also believed that they had the most influence on those programs. At such institutions CAOs demonstrated a passion for student learning and an ability to earn and maintain faculty rapport, trust, and credibility. Although CAOs felt an urgent desire to comply with accreditation demands, most reported demonstrating patience and persistence. The CAOs of self-perceived successful assessment programs also made a commitment to assessment-of-learning research and possessed in-depth assessment knowledge and experience beyond just attending conferences—often having “brought up” assessment-of-learning programs in more than one institution. The CAOs of successful programs favored a participatory, collaborative decision-making style; and were accessible to the faculty and staff. The CAOs indicated that they believed in taking special care in matching skills and motivation to required tasks within the assessment process. CAOs who believed their programs were successful depended upon faculty members who were willing to take risks and were able to function with some measure of autonomy.

This study revealed that institutions with self-perceived successful assessment-of-learning programs provided support through sufficient funding which generally was used to acquire testing materials, provide technology programs, and encourage faculty assessment initiatives. Institutions having successful assessment-of-learning programs provided funds also for faculty development which usually included travel and compensation to faculty members for

training and measurement development. When the budgets allowed, CAOs arranged for faculty remuneration, recognition, or other intangible incentives for assessment-of-learning efforts. Assessment-of-learning programs were guided by a mission statement that included assessment-of-learning language or related terms such as “quality” or “student learning.” The mission statement served as a talking point, heightened awareness of the assessment program, and demonstrated that the administration was serious about assessment.

CAOs viewed AQIP more as an on-going reporting process that makes assessment of learning more visible. They reported a belief that the AQIP-accrediting program is probably stronger than PEAQ and that not being an AQIP-accredited institution could lead to a laidback approach to assessment of learning.

Overview of Findings

Significant quantitative findings were supported by qualitative data. Qualitative interview data agreed with the quantitative data collected from the ASLPS survey, confirming that assessment-of-learning language was included in mission statements of perceived successful assessment-of-learning programs and confirming that successful assessment-of-learning programs were PEAQ-accredited. CAOs responses in the qualitative portion of this study offered additional data on accreditation and on CAO tenure that should be reported. These are explored next.

CAOs in their qualitative responses also supported the idea that PEAQ-accredited institutions were collecting data on a continuous basis and making data-driven decisions for the improvement of learning. This suggests that the AQIP process, a newer accreditation program, may have influenced *how* institutions operated assessment-of-learning programs within the

PEAQ framework. Instead of allowing the process to falter over a 10-year accreditation period, perceived successful assessment-of-learning programs internalized the process.

Although 8 of 10 self-perceived strongest and weakest programs were PEAQ accredited, five CAOs had favorable perceptions of AQIP, one had a negative perception of AQIP (high-scoring), and four made no comment about AQIP accreditation (two high- and two low-scoring). Two of the CAOs of perceived high-scoring institutions specifically referred to AQIP-accreditation favorably. For instance, one stated, “It is not that...they are doing more or less assessment, but they have reporting pieces [which] seem to be more on-going than PEAQ schools” require (Wagnon, Appendix O). Further, Wagnon stated, “I think the AQIP model is probably stronger.” Three of the perceived low-scoring institutions reported positive perceptions of AQIP. One of these low-scoring institution’s CAOs stated, “...you are constantly working on improvement projects, so you are always reminded of the importance of it [assessment]” (Berg, Appendix O).

Because CAOs were the most influential administrator linked to an institution’s assessment-of-learning program, CAO tenure was also of interest. Descriptive statistics of CAO tenure showed that CAOs with 11-15 years had a higher mean score than CAOs with less than 10 years, suggesting that CAOs perceived longer tenures contributed to the success of assessment-of-learning programs. Even though significance was not found in the quantitative section of the study for this item, comments from CAOs of both high-and low-scoring institutions noted the connection between tenure and successful programs. One of these two CAOs of low-scoring institutions commented:

I would say that over the long run one of the qualities or characteristics of the CAO position here has been the high degree of turnover...the high degree of variability

and perspective. If there is a lot of turnover or a lot of passing this thing [assessment] around, you never get on track because you are constantly trying to decide to go another journey. There has been a lot of fluctuation. As a result, nobody has a very good vision of what they [sic] are trying to accomplish. (Kerr, Appendix R)

The qualitative portion of this study further clarified traits of perceived assessment-of-learning programs. CAOs clearly considered internalization a determining factor in the perceived success of those programs. The data from qualitative interviews also confirmed the need for administrative and faculty commitment and leadership, and further implied that money spent on all areas of assessment support and assessment language in the mission statement made a difference in perceived assessment-of-learning programs' success.

Implications of Research

The 83 institutions in this study provided a glimpse of the perceived levels of success among community college assessment-of-learning programs in the Higher Learning Commission region. In some cases institutions are far behind other institutions with assessment-of-learning programs that are completing the assessment-of-learning cycle and making data-driven learning improvements. In order to come full cycle in an assessment-of-learning program, each institution is faced with the challenges of having the right environment and the “presence of a receptive institutional culture for assessment” (Banta et al., 1996, p. 36). Within that culture there is a need for having time and persistence to move from identification of areas needing improvement to the actual changes made. Add to these requirements the importance of having the necessary people with the appropriate motivation and skills to complete the tasks required at each level of assessment, and the situation can be formidable. Yet, this is necessary to maintain accreditation and to established accountability with the vast array of stakeholders.

To assist institutions that still have fledgling programs, a number of common characteristics can be important in order to achieve successful assessment-of-learning programs throughout the region. A set of such criteria could help reduce the time and money necessary to bring assessment-of-learning programs to a consistently higher and more uniform level. Findings from this study offer common traits that are supported by literature as characteristic of successful assessment-of-learning programs (Astin et al., 1996; Huba & Freed, 2000; Suskie, 2006a).

Quantitative research based on the ASLPS survey suggested common institutional dynamic traits (Table 9) that are of importance to community colleges seeking guidance in making improvements to their assessment-of-learning programs. Although the quantitative

Table 9:

Dynamics of Perceived Successful Institutions

1. PEAQ institutions more frequently include assessment-of-learning language in their mission statements than AQIP institutions.
 - a. PEAQ institutions are more likely than AQIP institutions to base assessment of learning on a conceptual framework that explains relationships among teaching, curriculum, learning, and assessment at the institution.
 - b. PEAQ institutions are more likely than AQIP institutions to base assessment of learning on data gathered from multiple measures.
 - c. PEAQ institutions are more likely than AQIP institutions to have institution-wide support for assessment-of-learning programs.
 2. When assessment language is included in the mission statement, assessment is considered a part of a larger set of conditions that promote change at the institution.
 - a. When assessment-of-learning language is included in the mission statement, assessment flows from the mission.
 - b. When assessment-of-learning language is included in the mission statement, the assessment program itself is regularly evaluated.
-

research revealed that CAOs from PEAQ-accredited institutions expressed having more successful assessment-of-learning programs, AQIP-accredited institutions received more favorable comments by CAOs of both high and low-scoring institutions in the qualitative research. Additionally, as seen in Table 9, PEAQ institutions more frequently included assessment-of-learning language in their mission statements than AQIP institutions.

Table 10 lists Traits of Perceived Successful Assessment-of-Learning Programs derived from the qualitative section of this research. From this table, one can see that perceived successful assessment-of-learning programs have reached a point where they are internalized,

Table 10:
Traits of Perceived Successful Assessment-of-Learning Programs

1. Successful assessment-of-learning programs are internalized.
 - a. All faculty members, full and part-time, are involved in all aspects of assessment.
 - b. Continuous data collection and reporting occur at least annually.
 - c. Data-driven improvements are made to student learning on a continuous basis.
 - d. Total staff enthusiasm with the whole process is demonstrated.
 2. Successful assessment-of-learning programs are most often influenced by an administrator, usually the CAO. The leader most often...
 - a. Has a passion for student learning.
 - b. Has the ability to earn and maintain faculty rapport, trust, and credibility.
 - c. Demonstrates patience and persistence.
 - d. Feels an urgent desire to comply with accreditation demands.
 - e. Is committed to assessment-of-learning research.
 - f. Possesses in-depth assessment knowledge & experience beyond the conference level.
 - g. Prefers a participatory, collaborative, and accessible management style.
 3. Successful assessment-of-learning programs have faculty members who:
 - a. Are willing to take risks.
 - b. Are given autonomy.
 - c. Receive remuneration.
 - d. Receive recognition or other intangible incentives.
 4. Successful assessment-of-learning programs have institutional support in the form of money budgeted for:
 - a. Assessment tests.
 - b. Academic assessment and technology programs.
 - c. Faculty assessment initiatives.
 - d. Faculty assessment development travel and faculty compensation
 - i. for training
 - ii. for measurement development
 5. Successful assessment-of-learning programs most often are guided by a mission statement that includes assessment-of-learning language or with related terms such as “quality” or “student learning.” The mission statement...
 - a. Serves as a talking point.
 - b. Heightens awareness of the assessment program.
 - c. Demonstrates that the administration is serious about assessment.
-

involving administration and all full-time and usually part-time faculty members in all aspects of assessment. The program is most influenced by a patient and persistent administrator who,

among other traits, is trusted by faculty and has a passion for student learning. Perceived successful programs tend to have faculty members who are given autonomy and who are willing to take risks and are rewarded for their time and efforts. Total faculty involvement was reported as critical to a perceived successful assessment-of-learning program. Faculty, or faculty dominated committees, tend to make most program decisions. Data collection and reporting is a continuous process providing data-driven improvements to student learning. The assessment process is met with total staff enthusiasm. Institutional support is a common trait among perceived successful programs and includes providing assessment material, technology, and faculty development opportunities. Perceived successful assessment-of-learning programs most often are guided by a mission statement that includes assessment-of-learning language or with related terms such as “quality” or “student learning.” Inclusion of assessment language heightens awareness of the assessment program and provides administrators a tool to demonstrate support for the program.

Tables 9 and 10 above, reflect the many common elements of institutional dynamics, administrative qualities and characteristics, and program support. These elements provide common traits found in perceived successful assessment-of-learning programs, increasing the chance of replicating success in community colleges within the Higher Learning Commission region. The researcher hopes that these commonalities will save institutions seeking to improve their assessment-of-learning programs both time and money and will lead to improved student learning on their campuses.

Recommendations

Research

The broad gap in levels of perceived success of assessment-of-learning programs in the Higher Learning Commission region was apparent with this research. As noted from qualitative interviews conducted, some institutions are still in the “talking stages” of their assessment-of-learning programs. Yet other institutions are well-advanced in making data-driven decisions. Further research is needed to understand these differences among programs and to find strategies to improve assessment-of-learning programs in community colleges across the region. Using the ASLPS instrument and qualitative interviews helped single out and reveal areas not addressed by some institutions. Exploring gaps in programs relative to meaningful program characteristics could provide a much-needed focus on areas of improvement. The reality of how one creates and manages a successful program could be the next step in moving assessment from the “think tank” to practice.

Institutions need to make certain that an assessment culture is developed. To do this some community colleges send their faculties to conferences, some visit other institutions with strong programs in the area, and some bring consultants to their campuses. The entire campus needs to know “the lingo” so that everyone is “on the same page.” Although, in this study those institutions with the highest perceived assessment-of-learning scores were all rural, still more needs to be done to see how technology can bring the needed information and people to campuses for those institutions that have small faculties who neither have the time nor the money for travel. Sharing of technology is already saving some campuses high dollars—and time. Linking to this wealth of knowledge and experience can sometimes be achieved through research. Knowing what to look for and where to get the resource is sometimes the key. Again,

knowing what constitutes a good program first is vital to making it happen. Research is needed to establish clearly these different aspects for institutions that do not yet have the whole picture of what a good assessment program is and how to find the right people to manage it.

Examining the constantly changing quality of assessment-of-learning programs at institutions is also important. This study revealed that CAOs managed most assessment-of-learning programs in the Higher Learning Commission's region. Research, therefore, on what is happening to assessment programs whose leadership is often interrupted and redefined with new leadership needs to be made. The qualitative portion of this study revealed that small campuses, especially, overload CAOs, deans, and even faculty with extra responsibilities. Examining what the full responsibilities are of the person most influential in handling the assessment-of-learning program may be very telling. Research to indicate how upper administration share the load of responsibilities, including assessment, may help colleges alleviate the overload which in turn may entice CAOs to remain in their positions longer—and may improve the institutions' assessment programs.

Some administrators, deans, and faculty members expressed that assessment added to their other responsibilities. Even the departmental and institutional budgets on some campuses were “added to” based on expenditures from the year before. Examining in detail how campuses process the collection of data and how assessment is funded should be invaluable to assessment programs still in their infancy—and even helpful to other institutions as the management of programs is refined.

This study has focused on finding common traits of successful assessment-of-learning programs. Learning the aspects of a sound assessment-of-learning program could help each institution find the resources in people, training, and technical needs to assist with data collection

and decision making for changes that are necessary. Continued research into the levels of success of assessment-of-learning may provide further knowledge that can help move institutions toward a data-driven decision-making stage, thus bringing less successful assessment-of-learning programs up to a more successful level among community colleges across the region. Finding and closing the gaps may provide the next step in advancing assessment of learning to a level of success appreciated and enjoyed by all community colleges.

Practice

Institutions that perceive themselves as less successful in implementing an assessment-of-learning program may need to examine their commitment to the assessment process. Further examination of the effect of the institution's accreditation method on the assessment-of-learning program may be enlightening. An examination of the involvement of full- and part-time faculty in the assessment-of-learning process, and whether or not the assessment-of-learning process "closes the loop," may reveal necessary program adjustments. Creating a culture where assessment reflects the faculty's educational values, where the institution provides faculty ownership and responsibility, and where the institution focuses on experiences that lead to outcomes, not just the outcomes themselves, is critical. In such a culture assessment is ongoing and the assessment program itself is regularly evaluated. Some institutions need to identify what is lacking in the way of trained personnel on campus. Someone with background in bringing up an assessment program could save their institution money. If this person, or someone who can serve as a resource on campus, has the knowledge of how to establish the environment needed for change and how to provide the right kind of documentation for data collection—the institution may have the foundation on which to build a successful program. If that person and others closely associated with the program have the interpersonal skills to develop trust and

faculty rapport, another hurdle has been overcome. Finding the right leadership in each of the departments, giving these people autonomy, remuneration, and incentives—whether tangible or intangible—may promote a level of enthusiasm that can contribute to a successful program.

AQIP institutions may want to focus on developing a conceptual framework that explains relationships among teaching, curriculum, learning, and assessment at the institution in order to internalize the assessment-of-learning process. Further, institutions will want to progress to the point that their assessment-of-learning programs are basing assessment decisions on data gathered from multiple measures. All of this needs to be done with strong institution-wide support. Additional institutional research may be done by the institution using the ASLPS survey to further examine gaps in the assessment-of-learning program.

An institution's success with assessment-of-learning may very well be tied to the level of commitment made by the administration and the level of engagement of faculty and staff. The culture of assessment should be endowed with the educational values of the faculty and involve practice that is natural to the assessment-of-learning process. In the words of one of the high-scoring CAOs:

I'm baffled personally that what is such an integral part of teaching has become such an almost odd piece. It should be intuitive, it should be natural, and it doesn't feel that way. It's almost become a dreaded word, and I think that is unfortunate. I don't think that was the intent, but assessment should be just part and parcel of teaching, so I'm not sure what that means. That has always kind of puzzled me. (Wagnon, Transcriptions)

Questions Yet to Be Explored

The findings of this research suggested several questions. For example, since the ASLPS survey instrument used in this study was important to investigating differences to guide future

research and to direct the qualitative interviews, use of this instrument to explore responses from faculty in leadership roles could be equally of interest. The five meta-themes from the CAOs' responses to the qualitative interviews could provide a basis for future exploration.

Questions about administrative and faculty understanding of, commitment to, and engagement in the assessment-of-learning process may provide further insight into achieving program success. Of particular interest could be those qualities and characteristics that engage faculty in the assessment-of-learning process. If one compared administrations' responses on the ASLPS survey from this study to faculties' responses on the ASLPS survey, could gaps in item responses help identify the needs of an institution's assessment-of-learning program? What is the connection between full and part-time faculty involvement to the success of an assessment-of-learning program?

Questions regarding CEO and CAO tenure may provide further insight into methods of maintaining assessment-of-learning programs despite high upper administration turnover. More than one CAO in this study commented about just being new to the position and trying to see exactly where the institution was in the process of assessment. How have changes of assessment-of-learning program leadership (CEO or CAO) affected the assessment-of-learning program itself? What is the relationship of CAO overload to tenure and program success? How do clearly defined job responsibilities affect assessment-of-learning programs? When an administrator who is responsible for the assessment program leaves, what is done to ensure the program continues without regression? Management of the assessment program on campus is a lifeline to accreditation for the institution and must be taken seriously.

Other relationships for future investigation are the extent to which assessment-of-learning are influenced by the AQIP- and PEAQ-accredited programs. How do AQIP and PEAQ

institutions differ in the way they gather data from multiple measures of student learning? How do AQIP and PEAQ institutions differ in the way they explain the conceptual relationships among teaching, curriculum, learning and assessment? From where, and to what extent, do AQIP and PEAQ institutions garner internal and external support for their assessment-of-learning programs? What is the nature of institutional support for AQIP- and PEAQ-accredited institutions? Exploring specific ASLPS items may provide further understanding of how those items contribute to successful programs.

Summary

Common institutional dynamics, administrative qualities and characteristics, and program support as identified in this study may help promote more consistency among assessment-of-learning programs in community colleges across the Higher Learning Commission region. Understanding these common traits and their importance to success may lead to the replication of success of assessment-of-learning programs, affecting both the time and money necessary to achieve success and further clarifying assessment-of-learning programs' effectiveness and consistency with institutional mission and purpose and expectations of accrediting bodies. Many institutions have not yet embraced assessment of learning to the extent that it is a part of the learning culture whose purpose is to provide the institution with the information to be accountable to its stakeholders. As one CAO commented when interviewed for the qualitative portion of this study,

I can't imagine there being another campus in the nation that hasn't started up with assessment yet, but if there is, I don't want to be the one to go there to start over because it is a process and it does take time, and I just hope that everybody is up [over] that learning curve at this stage. (Kosik, Transcriptions)

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APPENDIX A:
ASSESSMENT-OF-STUDENT-LEARNING PROGRAM SUCCESS
INSTRUMENT

ASSESSMENT-OF-STUDENT-LEARNING PROGRAM SUCCESS

Part I: Institutional Dynamics and Administrative Characteristics

1. Institution Zip Code: *(Control item to avoid duplicate entries)*
2. Type of institution: *(Urban: minimum residential population of at least 50,000 people. Rural: All others)*
Urban
Rural
3. How many years has your current Chief Executive Officer been in that position?
5 or less
6-10
11-15
16-20
21 or more
4. How many years have you (Chief Academic Officer) been in your current position?
5 or less
6-10
11-15
16-20
21 or more
5. Does your institution's mission statement include language that refers to assessment of learning? *(Language in the institution's mission documents that identifies educational outcomes intended for students and/or, refers to student assessment as an important activity)*
Yes
No
6. What percent of your institution's general fund budget was spent on assessment-of-learning in FY 2006?
5 % or less
6-10%
11-15%
16-20%
21-25%
26% or more
7. From which direction do decisions affecting your assessment-of-learning program come? *(Top down decisions from administrative level to faculty/staff or bottom up decisions from faculty/staff to administrative level.)*
Top down
Bottom up

Part II: Assessment-of-Learning Program Characteristics

Reflect on your institution's assessment-of-learning program, and then respond to each of the following statements relative to your agreement or disagreement with the statement. 5=Totally Agree, 4=Somewhat Agree, 3=Neither Agree nor Disagree, 2=Somewhat Disagree, and 1 = Totally Disagree.

	TA	SA	N	SD	TD
8. Assessment leads to improvement so that the faculty can fulfill their responsibilities to students and to the public.	5	4	3	2	1
9. Assessment is part of a larger set of conditions that promote change at the institution.	5	4	3	2	1
10. Assessment provides feedback to students and the institution.	5	4	3	2	1
11. Assessment focuses on using data to address questions that people in the program and at the institution really care about.	5	4	3	2	1
12. Assessment flows from the institution's mission	5	4	3	2	1
13. Assessment reflects the faculty's educational values.	5	4	3	2	1
14. The institution's educational programs have clear, explicitly stated purposes that guide assessment in the program.	5	4	3	2	1
15. Assessment is based on a conceptual framework that explains relationships among teaching, curriculum, learning, and assessment at the institution.	5	4	3	2	1
16. Faculty feel a sense of ownership and responsibility for assessment.	5	4	3	2	1
17. Faculty focus on experiences leading to outcomes as well as on the outcomes themselves.	5	4	3	2	1
18. Assessment is ongoing rather than episodic.	5	4	3	2	1
19. Assessment is cost-effective.	5	4	3	2	1
20. Assessment is based on data gathered from multiple measures.	5	4	3	2	1
21. Assessment supports diversity efforts rather than restricts them.	5	4	3	2	1
22. The assessment program itself is regularly evaluated.	5	4	3	2	1
23. Assessment has institution-wide support.	5	4	3	2	1
24. Representatives from across the education community are involved with assessment.	5	4	3	2	1

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APPENDIX B:
AAHE—9 PRINCIPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE FOR ASSESSING
STUDENT LEARNING

9 Principles of Good Practice for Assessing Student Learning

1. The assessment of student learning begins with educational values.
2. Assessment is most effective when it reflects an understanding of learning as multidimensional, integrated, and revealed in performance over time.
3. Assessment works best when the programs it seeks to improve have clear, explicitly stated purposes.
4. Assessment requires attention to outcomes but also and equally to the experiences that lead to those outcomes.
5. Assessment works best when it is ongoing not episodic.
6. Assessment fosters wider improvement when representatives from across the educational community are involved.
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.

(Astin et al., 1996)

APPENDIX C:
NORTH CENTRAL ASSOCIATION HALLMARKS OF SUCCESSFUL
PROGRAMS TO ASSESS STUDENT ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

Hallmarks of Successful Programs to Assess Student Academic Achievement

North Central Association—Commission on Institutions of Higher Education, 1994

Successful assessment:

1. Flows from the institution's mission.
2. Has a conceptual framework.
3. Has faculty ownership/responsibility.
4. Has institution-wide support.
5. Uses multiple measures.
6. Provides feedback to students and the institution.
7. Is cost-effective.
8. Does not restrict or inhibit goals of access, equity, and diversity established by the institution.
9. Leads to improvement.
10. Includes a process for evaluating the assessment program.

Huba & Freed (2000, p. 67).

APPENDIX D:
KEY QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER WHEN ESTABLISHING OR
EVALUATING AN ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

Key Questions to Consider when Establishing or Evaluating an Assessment Program

Does assessment lead to improvement so that the faculty can fulfill their responsibilities to students and to the public?

Is assessment part of a larger set of conditions that promote change at the institution?

Does it [assessment] provide feedback to students and the institution?

Does assessment focus on using data to address questions that people in the program and at the institution really care about?

Does assessment flow from the institution's mission and reflect the faculty's educational values?

Does the educational program have clear, explicitly stated purposes that can guide assessment in the program?

Is assessment based on a conceptual framework that explains relationships among teaching, curriculum, learning, and assessment of the institution?

Do the faculty feel a sense of ownership and responsibility for assessment?

Do the faculty focus on experiences leading to outcomes as well as on the outcomes themselves?

Is assessment ongoing rather than episodic?

Is assessment cost-effective and based on data gathered from multiple measures?

Does assessment support diversity efforts rather than restrict them?

Is the assessment program itself regularly evaluated?

Does assessment have institution-wide support?

Are representatives from across the educational community involved?

Huba & Fried (2000, pp. 68-85).

APPENDIX E:
FIVE DIMENSIONS OF GOOD ASSESSMENT

Five Dimensions of Good Assessment

Good assessments are used to inform important decisions, especially those to improve curriculum and pedagogy but also regarding planning, budgeting, and accountability.

- A. Assessments that are used are planned and purposeful; they start with a clear understanding of why you are assessing.*
- B. Assessments that are used focus on clear and important goals.*
- C. Assessments that are used involve the active participation of those with a stake in decisions stemming from the results.*
- D. Assessments that are used are communicated widely and transparently (clearly and understandably).*
- E. Assessments that are used are used fairly, ethically, and responsibly.*

Good assessments are cost-effective, yielding value that justifies the time and expense we put into them (Suskie, 2004).

- A. Cost-effective assessments focus on clear and important goals.*
- B. Cost-effective assessments start with what you have.*
- C. Cost-effective assessments are simple and have minimal paperwork.*

Good assessments yield reasonably accurate and truthful results, of sufficient quality that they can be used with confidence to make decisions about curricula and pedagogy (Suskie, 2004).

- A. Assessments yielding reasonably accurate and truthful results flow from clear and important goals.*
- B. Assessments yielding reasonably accurate and truthful results represent a balanced sample of key goals, including multidimensional, integrative thinking skills.*
- C. Assessments yielding reasonably accurate and truthful results use a variety of approaches, including direct evidence of student learning.*
- D. Assessments yielding reasonably accurate and truthful results recognize diverse approaches to teaching, learning, and assessment.*
- E. Assessments yielding reasonably accurate and truthful results assess teaching-learning processes as well as outcomes.*
- F. Assessments yielding reasonably accurate and truthful results are developed thoughtfully.*
- G. Assessments yielding reasonably accurate and truthful results are perpetual works in progress.*

Good assessments are valued.

- A. Valued assessment efforts yield results that inform important decisions on important goals.*
- B. Valued assessment efforts are recognized and honored through meaningful incentives and rewards.*
- C. Valued assessments are part of an institutional climate in which innovation, risk taking, and efforts to improve teaching and learning are recognized and honored through meaningful incentives and rewards.*
- D. Valued assessments are supported with appropriate resources, including time, guidance, support, and feedback.*

Good assessments focus on and flow from clear and important goals.

- A. Assessments with clear goals have clear, appropriate standards for acceptable and exemplary student performance.*

Retrieved January 6, 2007, from http://www.rowan.edu/provost/act/process/documents/what_is_good_assessment.pdf

APPENDIX F:
KEY QUESTIONS, PRINCIPLES, HALLMARKS, AND DIMENSIONS OF
SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS

Key Questions, Principles, Hallmarks, and Dimensions of Successful Programs

Huba & Freed's Key Questions	AAHE Nine Principles	NCA Hallmarks of Successful Programs	Suskie Five Dimensions of Good Assessment
Does assessment lead to improvement so that the faculty can fulfill their responsibilities to students and to the public?	Through assessment, educators meet responsibilities to students and to the public.		Good assessments are used to inform important decisions, especially those to improve curriculum and pedagogy but also regarding planning, budgeting, and accountability.
Is assessment part of a larger set of conditions that promote change at the institution?	Assessment is most likely to lead to improvement when it is part of a larger set of conditions that promote change.		
Does it [assessment] provide feedback to students and the institution?		Provides feedback to students and the institution.	Good assessments yield reasonably accurate and truthful results, of sufficient quality that they can be used with confidence to make decisions about curricula and pedagogy.
Does assessment focus on using data to address questions that people in the program and at the institution really care about?	Assessment makes a difference when it begins with issues of use and illuminates questions that people really care about.		
Does assessment flow from the institution's mission and reflect the faculty's educational values?	The assessment of student learning begins with educational values.	Flows from the institution's mission.	Good assessments focus on and flow from clear and important goals. Good assessments are valued.
Does the educational program have clear, explicitly stated purposes that can guide assessment in the program?	Assessment works best when the programs it seeks to improve have clear, explicitly stated purposes.		
Is assessment based on a conceptual framework that explains relationships among teaching, curriculum, learning, and assessment of the institution?	Assessment is most effective when it reflects an understanding of learning as multidimensional, integrated, and revealed in performance over time.	Has a conceptual framework.	
Do the faculty feel a sense of ownership and responsibility for assessment?		Has faculty ownership/responsibility.	
Do the faculty focus on experiences leading to outcomes as well as on the outcomes themselves?	Assessment requires attention to outcomes but also and equally to the experiences that lead to those outcomes.		
Is assessment ongoing rather than episodic?	Assessment works best when it is ongoing not episodic.	Leads to improvement.	
Is assessment cost-effective and based on data gathered from multiple measures?		Is cost-effective. Uses multiple measures.	Good assessments are cost-effective, yielding value that justifies the time and expense we put into them.
Does assessment support diversity efforts rather than restrict them?		Does not restrict or inhibit goals of access, equity, and diversity established by the institution.	
Is the assessment program itself regularly evaluated?		Includes a process for evaluating the assessment program.	
Does assessment have institution-wide support?		Has institution-wide support.	
Are representatives from across the educational community involved?	Assessment fosters wider improvement when representatives from across the educational community are involved.		

APPENDIX G:
SOURCE OF INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

Source of Independent Variables

Variable	Definition	Value	Data Source
<i>Institutional Characteristics</i>			
Type	Urban or rural	0-1	Survey
AQIP Institution	HLC approved AQIP	0-1	HLC*
<i>Administrative Dynamics</i>			
CEO tenure	Years current Chief Executive Officer in position	1-5	Survey
CAO tenure	Years current Chief Academic Officer in position	1-5	Survey
Top-down/bottom-up decision making	From which direction decisions affecting assessment are made.	0-1	Survey
<i>Assessment Program Support</i>			
Mission Emphasis	Mission statement includes language of assessment of learning.	0-1	Survey
Resources	Percent of general fund budget spent on assessment-of-learning in FY06.	1-6	Survey

*HLC: Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Schools and Colleges

APPENDIX H:
LETTER TO CHIEF ACADEMIC OFFICER

«CAO_Name»

«College»

«Address»

«City», «ST» «Zip»

Dear «CAO_Name»:

I am a doctoral student at Kansas State University, working under the direction of Dr. W. Franklin Spikes. Through survey research and personal interviews I am exploring the relationship of selected characteristics, administrative dynamics, and program support with assessment-of-learning programs in community colleges in the North Central Association region. This study is exploring the following questions:

1. What is the relationship between proposed elements of successful assessment-of-learning programs and selected institutional characteristics?
2. What is the relationship between proposed elements of successful assessment-of-learning programs and selected administrative dynamics?
3. What is the relationship between proposed elements of successful assessment-of-learning programs and support for such programs?
4. What institutional, administrative, and program constructs are consistent among institutions showing high levels of conformity with proposed elements of successful assessment-of-learning programs and how do they contribute to program success?

This research will provide current and aspiring Chief Academic Officers with contemporary knowledge of characteristics, administrative dynamics, and program attributes which may contribute to improved assessment-of-learning programs. This is a regional study and, therefore, a high response rate is important to make valid inferences from the results.

The study will involve a self-evaluation of your assessment-of-learning program. **You will be receiving an e-mail message at «E-mail» within the next two weeks, alerting you of the forthcoming on-line survey.** After data from this survey are examined, ten institutions will be selected for Chief Academic Officer interviews. In-depth interviews will explore the relationship of administrative and institutional characteristics to the levels of conformity with proposed elements of successful assessment-of-learning programs.

Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the study, with only the researcher knowledgeable of institutions responding. Your response to the impending e-mail would be most appreciated. Thank you for your assistance. If you have questions, or the above referenced e-mail address is incorrect, please contact me by e-mailing rothgeb@indycc.edu or by calling (620) 331-0108.

Respectfully,

Ray D. Rothgeb
Doctoral Candidate

APPENDIX I:
CHIEF ACADEMIC OFFICER E-MAIL WITH SURVEY LINK

To... *chiefacademicofficer@communitycollege.edu*

Cc...

Subject... Assessment-of-learning Program Survey

Dear *Chief Academic Officer*:

I am a doctoral student at Kansas State University and currently working on my dissertation under the direction of Dr. W. Franklin Spikes. Through survey research and personal interviews I am exploring the relationship of selected characteristics and dynamics to assessment-of-learning programs in community colleges in the North Central Association region.

This study involves a self-evaluation of your assessment program through a short survey found by clicking on the hyperlink at the end of this message. After data from this survey are examined, ten institutions will be selected for Chief Academic Officer telephone interviews. Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the study with only the researcher knowledgeable of institutional responses. Your participation would be most valuable and appreciated.

By clicking on the link below you are confirming that you understand this project is research, and that your participation is completely voluntary. You also understand that if you decide to participate in this study, you may withdraw your consent at any time, and stop participating at any time without explanation, penalty, or loss of benefits to which you may otherwise be entitled. You further agree that you have read and understand this consent form, and willingly agree to participate in this study under the terms described, and that you may print the survey instrument at any time. Questions regarding your rights as a participant in this study should be directed to Dr. Rick J. Scheidt, Chair, KSU IRB, Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, 785-532-3224.

Ray D. Rothgeb, rothgeb@indycc.edu

Click here: <http://www.indycc.edu/surveys/assessmentsurvey.htm>

If the above link does not automatically take you to the assessment survey page, either type or copy and paste it in your browser's address bar.

APPENDIX J:
CHIEF ACADEMIC OFFICER'S FOLLOW-UP LETTER

«CAO_Name»
«College»
«Address»
«City», «ST» «Zip»

Dear «Greeting»:

On «Date_E-mailed» I e-mailed a message with a link to the Assessment-of-Learning Survey I am using for my dissertation. If the link contained in the e-mail did not automatically take you to the assessment survey page, you may either type or copy and paste it in your browser's address bar. Your response to the assessment survey instrument is important. For your convenience another e-mail will be sent to «E-mail».

Once data from the self-evaluation survey are analyzed, ten institutions will be selected for Chief Academic Officer interviews. Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the study with only the researcher knowledgeable of institutional responses.

Thank you for your continued support of this study.

Sincerely,

Ray Rothgeb
rothgeb@indycc.edu
(620) 331-0108

APPENDIX K:
CHIEF ACADEMIC OFFICER INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Chief Academic Officer Interview Protocol

Introductory comment: Based on a survey that was completed on *date*, your institution was selected for further study of the relationship of your assessment-of-learning program to selected characteristics and dynamics. In an effort to better understand the implications of these characteristics and dynamics, I would like to ask the following questions. Please feel free to elaborate on any item mentioned.

1. Who in your organization has the most influence on the operation of your assessment-of-learning program? What qualities does this person possess that promotes success in your program?
2. What personal administrative characteristics or qualities from your tenure as Chief Academic Officer have contributed to the current level of success of your assessment-of-learning program?
3. What personal administrative characteristics or qualities from the tenure of your Chief Executive Officer have contributed to the current level of success of your assessment-of-learning program?
4. In what way has the amount of money spent on your assessment-of-learning program contributed to its current level of success.
5. Do you perceive that your location in an urban/rural setting has affected your level of success in your assessment-of-learning program?
6. How would you describe your management style?
7. From where, do you believe most of the impetus has come for the current level of success of your assessment-of-learning program? How has this made a difference?
8. What guidelines do you use to determine the percentage of your institution's budget that is spent on assessment of learning?
9. In what way have faculty been involved in assessment of learning? How has this contributed to faculty development? (Banta et al., 1996).
10. *Additional questions based on findings from analysis of quantitative data.*

(The following question is asked only of AQIP institutions.)

11. How has your status as an AQIP institution affected your assessment-of-learning program? How have the AQIP projects contributed to the success maturity of your assessment-of-learning program?

APPENDIX L:
NORTH CENTRAL ASSOCIATION LIST OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES

North Central Association List of Community Colleges

Aims Community College	CO	Accredited
Allen County Community College	KS	Accredited
Alpena Community College	MI	Accredited
Anoka-Ramsey Community College	MN	Accredited
Arapahoe Community College	CO	Accredited
Barton County Community College	KS	Accredited
Bay de Noc Community College	MI	Accredited
Bay Mills Community College	MI	Accredited
Blue Ridge Community and Technical College	WV	Accredited
Butler County Community College	KS	Accredited
Cankdeska Cikana Community College	ND	Accredited
Central Community College	NE	Accredited
Central New Mexico Community College	NM	Accredited
Century Community and Technical College	MN	Accredited
Charles Stewart Mott Community College	MI	Accredited
Cincinnati State Technical and Community College	OH	Accredited
Clark State Community College	OH	Accredited
Cloud County Community College	KS	Accredited
Clovis Community College	NM	Accredited
Coconino County Community College	AZ	Accredited
Coffeyville Community College	KS	Accredited
Colby Community College	KS	Accredited
Colorado Northwestern Community College	CO	Accredited
Columbus State Community College	OH	Accredited
Community & Technical College at West Virginia Univ. Institute of Technology	WV	Accredited
Community College of Denver	CO	Accredited
Cossatot Community College of the University of Arkansas	AR	Accredited
Cowley County Community College and Area Vocational-Technical School	KS	Accredited

Cuyahoga Community College	OH	Accredited
Danville Area Community College	IL	Accredited
Des Moines Area Community College	IA	Accredited
Dodge City Community College	KS	Accredited
East Arkansas Community College	AR	Accredited
Eastern Iowa Community College District	IA	Accredited
Edison State Community College	OH	Accredited
Elgin Community College	IL	Accredited
Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College	MN	Accredited
Fort Berthold Community College	ND	Accredited
Fort Scott Community College	KS	Accredited
Front Range Community College	CO	Accredited
Glen Oaks Community College	MI	Accredited
Gogebic Community College	MI	Accredited
Grand Rapids Community College	MI	Accredited
Hawkeye Community College	IA	Accredited
Heartland Community College	IL	Accredited
Henry Ford Community College	MI	Accredited
Hibbing Community College	MN	Accredited
Highland Community College	KS	Accredited
Hutchinson Community College	KS	Accredited
Illinois Eastern Community Colleges	IL	Accredited
Illinois Valley Community College	IL	Accredited
Independence Community College	KS	Accredited
Indian Hills Community College	IA	Accredited
Inver Hills Community College	MN	Accredited
Iowa Central Community College	IA	Accredited
Iowa Lakes Community College	IA	Accredited
Iowa Valley Community College District	IA	Accredited
Iowa Western Community College	IA	Accredited

Itasca Community College	MN	Accredited
Ivy Tech Community College of Indiana	IN	Accredited
Jackson Community College	MI	Accredited
Jefferson Community College	OH	Accredited
John Wood Community College	IL	Accredited
Johnson County Community College	KS	Accredited
Kalamazoo Valley Community College	MI	Accredited
Kankakee Community College	IL	Accredited
Kansas City Kansas Community College	KS	Accredited
Kellogg Community College	MI	Accredited
Kilian Community College	SD	Accredited
Kirkwood Community College	IA	Accredited
Kirtland Community College	MI	Accredited
Labette Community College	KS	Accredited
Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwa Community College	WI	Accredited
Lakeland Community College	OH	Accredited
Lamar Community College	CO	Accredited
Lansing Community College	MI	Accredited
Laramie County Community College	WY	Accredited
Lewis and Clark Community College	IL	Accredited
Lincoln Land Community College	IL	Accredited
Lorain County Community College	OH	Accredited
Luna Community College	NM	Accredited
Macomb Community College	MI	Accredited
Maricopa Community Colleges-Chandler-Gilbert Community College	AZ	Accredited
Maricopa Community Colleges-Estrella Mountain Community College	AZ	Accredited
Maricopa Community Colleges-GateWay Community College	AZ	Accredited
Maricopa Community Colleges-Glendale Community College	AZ	Accredited
Maricopa Community Colleges-Mesa Community College	AZ	Accredited
Maricopa Community Colleges-Paradise Valley Community College	AZ	Accredited

Maricopa Community Colleges-Phoenix College	AZ	Accredited
Maricopa Community Colleges-Rio Salado Community College	AZ	Accredited
Maricopa Community Colleges-Scottsdale Community College	AZ	Accredited
Maricopa Community Colleges-South Mountain Community College	AZ	Accredited
Marshall Community and Technical College	WV	Accredited
Mesabi Range Community & Technical College	MN	Accredited
Mesalands Community College	NM	Accredited
Metropolitan Community College	NE	Accredited
Metropolitan Community College-Kansas City	MO	Accredited
Mid Michigan Community College	MI	Accredited
Mid-Plains Community College	NE	Accredited
Mid-South Community College	AR	Accredited
Minneapolis Community and Technical College	MN	Accredited
Minnesota State Community and Technical College	MN	Accredited
Minnesota West Community and Technical College	MN	Accredited
Moberly Area Community College	MO	Accredited
Mohave Community College	AZ	Accredited
Monroe County Community College	MI	Accredited
Montcalm Community College	MI	Accredited
Moraine Valley Community College	IL	Accredited
Morgan Community College	CO	Accredited
Muskegon Community College	MI	Accredited
National Park Community College	AR	Accredited
Nebraska Indian Community College	NE	Accredited
Neosho County Community College	KS	Accredited
New River Community and Technical College	WV	Accredited
Normandale Community College	MN	Accredited
North Hennepin Community College	MN	Accredited
North Iowa Area Community College	IA	Accredited
Northeast Community College	NE	Accredited

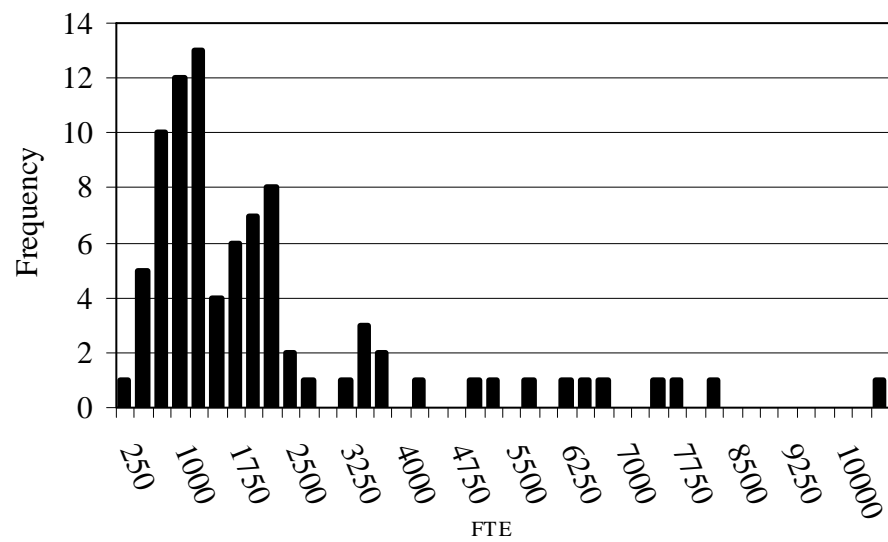
Northeast Iowa Community College	IA	Accredited
Northern Wyoming Community College District	WY	Accredited
Northland Community and Technical College	MN	Accredited
NorthWest Arkansas Community College	AR	Accredited
Northwest Iowa Community College	IA	Accredited
Northwest State Community College	OH	Accredited
Oakland Community College	MI	Accredited
Oakton Community College	IL	Accredited
Oklahoma City Community College	OK	Accredited
Owens Community College	OH	Accredited
Ozarks Technical Community College	MO	Accredited
Pikes Peak Community College	CO	Accredited
Pima County Community College District	AZ	Accredited
Pratt Community College	KS	Accredited
Pueblo Community College	CO	Accredited
Rainy River Community College	MN	Accredited
Red Rocks Community College	CO	Accredited
Redlands Community College	OK	Accredited
Rich Mountain Community College	AR	Accredited
Richland Community College	IL	Accredited
Riverland Community College	MN	Accredited
Rochester Community and Technical College	MN	Accredited
Saint Charles Community College	MO	Accredited
Saint Louis Community College	MO	Accredited
Santa Fe Community College	NM	Accredited
Sauk Valley Community College	IL	Accredited
Seward County Community College	KS	Accredited
Shawnee Community College	IL	Accredited
Sinclair Community College	OH	Accredited
South Arkansas Community College	AR	Accredited

Southeast Community College Area	NE	Accredited
Southeastern Community College	IA	Accredited
Southern State Community College	OH	Accredited
Southern West Virginia Community and Technical College	WV	Accredited
Southwestern Community College	IA	Accredited
St. Clair County Community College	MI	Accredited
State Fair Community College	MO	Accredited
Terra State Community College	OH	Accredited
Three Rivers Community College	MO	Accredited
Tohono O'odham Community College	AZ	Accredited
Tulsa Community College	OK	Accredited
Turtle Mountain Community College	ND	Accredited
University of Arkansas Community College at Batesville	AR	Accredited
University of Arkansas Community College at Hope	AR	Accredited
University of Arkansas Community College at Morrilton	AR	Accredited
University of Rio Grande/Rio Grande Community College	OH	Accredited
Vermilion Community College	MN	Accredited
Washtenaw Community College	MI	Accredited
Waubonsee Community College	IL	Accredited
Wayne County Community College District	MI	Accredited
West Shore Community College	MI	Accredited
West Virginia Northern Community College	WV	Accredited
West Virginia State Community and Technical College	WV	Accredited
Western Iowa Tech Community College	IA	Accredited
Western Nebraska Community College	NE	Accredited
Western Wyoming Community College	WY	Accredited

Retrieved January 7, 2007, from [http://www.North Central Associationhlc.org/index.php?option=com_directory&Itemid=192](http://www.NorthCentralAssociationhlc.org/index.php?option=com_directory&Itemid=192). Search = Community College.

APPENDIX M:
FTE FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION

Figure 2:
FTE Frequency Distribution



APPENDIX N:
INDEPENDENT VARIABLE TESTS

Type of Institution

<i>t</i> test for ASLPS Survey by Type of Institution		
	Rural	Urban
Mean	67.50	70.30
Standard Deviation	9.16	7.71
Number	52	31
$n = 83$		
$\alpha = .05$		
H_{02} = No difference in means		
$t = -1.39$		
Sig. (2 tailed) = .17		

Accreditation Method

<i>t</i> test for ASLPS Survey by Accreditation Method		
	AQIP	PEAQ
Mean	66.10	70.30
Standard Deviation	7.97	8.84
Number	34	49
$n = 83$		
$\alpha = .05$		
H_{03} = No difference in means		
$t = -2.23$		
Sig. (2 tailed) = .029		

Accreditation Method Comparisons

<i>t</i> test for ASLPS Survey Item 8 “Based on Conceptual Framework” by Accreditation Method		
	AQIP	PEAQ
Mean	3.56	4.22
Standard Deviation	0.96	0.82
Number	34	49
$n = 83$		
$t = -3.38$		
Sig. (2 tailed) = .001		

<i>t</i> test for ASLPS Item 13 “Based on Data” by Accreditation Method		
	AQIP	PEAQ
Mean	4.21	4.57
Standard Deviation	0.88	0.68
Number	34	49
<i>n</i> = 83		
<i>t</i> = -2.14		
Sig. (2 tailed) = .036		

<i>t</i> test for ASLPS Item 16 “Institution-wide support...” by Accreditation Method		
	AQIP	PEAQ
Mean	3.65	4.04
Standard Deviation	0.85	0.87
Number	34	49
<i>n</i> = 83		
<i>t</i> = -2.06		
Sig. (2 tailed) = .043		

CEO Tenure

ANOVA for ASLPS Survey on CEO Tenure (years)				
	5 or less	6-10	16-20	21+
Mean	68.10	69.80	68.50	65.00
Standard Deviation	9.61	7.4	4.36	8.69
Number	45	17	4	5
<i>n</i> = 83				
alpha = .05				
H_{04} = No difference in means				
<i>F</i> = 0.39				
Sig. = .815				

CAO Tenure

ANOVA for ASLPS Survey on CAO Tenure (years)					
	5 or less	6-10	11-15	16-20	21+
Mean	68.70	66.00	73.00	79.00	57.00
Standard Deviation	8.80	7.88	7.30	7.07	n/a
Number	54	19	7	2	1
$n = 83$					
$\alpha = .05$					
$H_{05} = \text{No difference in means}$					
$F = 2.15$					
$\text{Sig.} = .083$					

Decision-Making Style

t test for ASLPS Survey by Decision-Making Style		
	Bottom-Up	Top-Down
Mean	69.40	65.40
Standard Deviation	9.04	6.51
Number	66	17
$n = 83$		
$\alpha = .05$		
$H_{06} = \text{No difference in means}$		
$t = -1.72$		
$\text{Sig. (2 tailed)} = .089$		

Mission Language

t test for ASLPS Survey by Mission Language		
	Excluded Language	Included Language
Mean	67.10	71.10
Standard Deviation	8.10	9.22
Number	52	31
$n = 83$		
$\alpha = .05$		
$H_{07} = \text{No difference in means}$		
$t = -2.07$		
$\text{Sig. (2 tailed)} = .042$		

Mission Language Comparisons

<i>t</i> test for ASLPS Survey Item 2 “Part of larger conditions ...” by Mission Language		
	Excluded Language	Included Language
Mean	4.37	4.65
Standard Deviation	0.63	0.61
Number	52	31
<i>n</i> = 83		
alpha = .05		
<i>t</i> = -1.99		
Sig. (2 tailed) = .050		

<i>t</i> test for ASLPS Item 5 “Flows from the mission ...” by Mission Language		
	Excluded Language	Included Language
Mean	3.69	4.45
Standard Deviation	0.98	0.72
Number	52	31
<i>n</i> = 83		
alpha = .05		
<i>t</i> = -3.74		
Sig. (2 tailed) = .000*		

<i>t</i> test for ASLPS Item 15 “Program regularly evaluated” by Mission Language		
	Excluded Language	Included Language
Mean	3.65	4.13
Standard Deviation	0.91	0.89
Number	52	31
<i>n</i> = 83		
alpha = .05		
<i>t</i> = -2.33		
Sig. (2 tailed) = .022		

Spending on Assessment

<i>t</i> test for ASLPS Composite Score and Spending on Assessment		
	5% or less	11-15%
Mean	67.74	77.67
Standard Deviation	8.88	5.51
Number	68	3
<i>n</i> = 83		
alpha = .05		
<i>t</i> = -1.91		
Sig. = .060		

Mission Language by AQIP/PEAQ

Crosstab of Mission Language by AQIP/PEAQ				
		AQIP	PEAQ	Total
Mission Language	No	25	27	52
	Yes	9	22	31
<i>n</i> = 83				
alpha = .05				
χ^2 = .09				
Sig. = .060				

APPENDIX O:
THEMES FROM QUALITATIVE SURVEY: IMPACT OF LOCATION

THEMES FROM QUALITATIVE SURVEY

Location

HIGH SCORING

CAO/ Institution	Impact from Other Sources	Location Impact
Ms. Royse County Community College	Focus on assessment of learning improves student learning. "It makes assessment of learning far more important. We have a large percentage of developmental courses needed in this area. Being able to measure our successes is one that is not only important, but it's also a way to celebrate the graduation of our students who start out, specifically those who are developmental students, and they do really well because of our assessment process which really focuses on continual improvement." "Being able to measure success is one way to celebrate students' graduation."	Makes assessment of learning far more important. Focuses on continual improvement.
Mr. Leroy High Plains Community College		Negative: Have to adjust when doing assessment because of their isolation. The nearest major airport is over a hundred miles away.
Dr. Friend Exploration Community College	Strong influence of North Central (positive or negative isn't stated) Other than this location issue, the CAO doesn't credit setting as having much influence. Regional HLC influence as a result of being in same state, location probably doesn't have much to do with the success of the learning assessment initiative.	"in a village...next to a small city...largely rural." "Face-to-face and on-line communication" used.
Dr. Kosik Stone County Community College		"I don't know that it has to have an effect, urban or rural." "If you are in an urban environment, you probably have more opportunities to travel closer by to convene with others on this topic than you do if you are rural; and travel is more expensive, and it's more difficult to involve more people at the grass roots level on the campus in the travel." Bring expertise into campus and try to "expose as many of our assessing faculty to the experts on site as possible."
Dr. Wagon State Community College		Negative: Don't have another neighboring two-year campus nearby with peers to talk about assessment on a regular basis. Probably somewhat isolated. One of the ways we are going...to improve that is...to send a third of our faculty to the HLC over the next three years, so that at the end of three years all faculty would have had the opportunity to go to the Annual Meeting in Chicago--to kind of have that opportunity to interact..."

Urban
Rural

THEMES FROM QUALITATIVE SURVEY

Location

LOW SCORING

CAO/ Institution	Impact from Other Sources	Location Impact
Dr. Kerr Regional CC		"Wouldn't expect it to impact it that much." "can hold off change a little bit longer because there aren't as many eyes looking at you, your are not as big." Slow you down because there are fewer people outside the organization. Progress & improvement easier to hide.
Dr. Childs Area Community College		"Don't know that location affects assessment of learning. Because of fewer numbers, it is more noticeable whether or not something is done to enhance learning." "There is more personal knowledge of each student's progress" as a result of location affecting the assessment of learning. "you see the personal impact of learning or not learning, which ...makes it more important for us to have our assessment of student learning working to its potential."
Dr. Avers Western CC		Don't see this as a factor.
Mr. Berg Sylvan Community College		First this CAO suggested it would have a negative impact, but decided it had both, but that the positive influence was more important. Negative: "being in a smaller area, rural setting, you have to travel farther for conferences and to get people to things like that. It does cost more from that standpoint...." Positive: "...but I would say just from the quality of what you get out of the data sometimes,...but I think sometimes in a rural setting you tend to have students who are more focused on learning and...probably have a higher success rate, and I know we have a higher retention rate of students from fall to fall than the national averages. So I would say that being in a rural setting is more beneficial because you are more likely to retain the students, [resulting in] more completers, and typically those students do better on their assessment tests."
Dr. Paxton Langston Community College	Clientele has more of an impact. This college has a lot of immigrants which are from a lower socially economic background. "Expectation does have a little bit of impact on how we set up our assessment. The fact that many of our students are under prepared and [from a] lower social economic background probably causes us to be a little bit more forgiving possibly than a more comprehensive institution might be." "Expectation does have little bit of impact on how we set up our assessment. The fact that many students are under prepared and from lower social/economic background cause us to be a little bit more forgiving than a more comprehensive institution."	

Urban
Rural

APPENDIX P:
THEMES FROM QUALITATIVE SURVEY: INFLUENCE OF
ACCREDITATION STATUS

THEMES FROM QUALITATIVE SURVEY

Accreditation Status

HIGH SCORING

CAO/Institution	Internalizing the Assessment Process	Perception of AQIP
Ms. Royse County Community College	Had system in place before accreditation visit. HLC liked reports and the exit exam scores. Had process in place before required and emphasized the PEAQ process.	
Mr. Leroy High Plains Community College	After last visit needed to add to student learning outcomes and develop a procedure manual. Started with CAPP as a means of assessment. Process contributed to the growing of their assessment policies. Developed a type of paper trail. Assessment before this Dean didn't go as well, so this Dean changed some things. For example, he added to student learning outcomes, developed a procedural manual, redid some forms, started with CAPP as a means of assessing, and looked at completion with two-year programs.	
Dr. Friend Exploration Community College	"The institution expected annual faculty performance objectives" and became "very directive about what we wanted faculty members to report on, so that we could collect action looping information." They are now in their third cycle of action looping data collection. The faculty continues to evaluate annually, with support from the CAO and the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning.	The CAO stated that he feels "the fact that it is not an AQIP institution has led to probably some lax approach to [assessment of learning.]"
Dr. Kosik Stone County Community College	Feel like they are "behind the wheel" with current PEAQ model. By conducting parallel assessment activities to course delivery and outcomes measurement they are learning how to better strengthen what is being done in the classroom.	Weren't impressed with AQIP model after trip to HLC annual meeting.
Dr. Wagnon State Community College	PEAQ is looked at as maintaining the "status quo"	AQIP was recognized for the different, more systematic process in the reporting. "it's not that maybe they are doing more or less assessment, but they have reporting pieces [which] seem to be more ongoing than the PEAQ schools" require. "AQIP, as I understand it (I've not been at an AQIP school), does require ongoing reporting, whereas PEAQ is more cumulative. It's a bigger event at a longer length of time. I think the AQIP model is probably stronger."

AQIP	
PEAQ	

THEMES FROM QUALITATIVE SURVEY

Accreditation Status

LOW SCORING

CAO/Institution	Internalizing the Assessment Process	Perception of AQIP
Dr. Kerr Regional Community College	"Because we are AQIP it keeps things in front of us." "We do have action teams. There is just more overall impetus to keep going down this road and make some things happen." Continuing to push the quality envelope.	
Dr. Childs Area Community College	Process has focused on assessment of student learning structure. "Process keeps you coming back to basic assessment questions." "The challenge for PEAQ institutions is the long span between accreditation visits."	
Dr. Avers Western Community College	Don't collect data systematically. Don't use data to guide planning. Don't use data to approve learning outcomes. Not an internalized process yet. The institution just started AQIP and just received their first projects. Helping build a mindset to look at data more concretely. Got first project on the table, though not directly related to assessment of learning it does address improving developmental studies.	AQIP made institution more aware of assessment of learning.
Mr. Berg Sylvan Community College	Recently went through focus visit on assessment. Made adjustments to revamp program with faculty and HLC input. Process has influenced institution to make slight adjustments to "meet those accreditation guidelines." "A PEAQ school, if you receive a ten-year accreditation and no stipulations, then you may drop the ball on it, and/or your faculty or staff may lose the interest in that program" (Q12)*.	"I can see that what happens with the AQIP schools, or what I am hearing from people who are AQIP schools, is that you are constantly working on improvement projects, so you are always reminded of the importance of it [assessment]" (Q12)*.
Dr. Paxton Langston Community College	Got clearance on assessment plan several years ago. Typical of most institutions "unless they have hot coal keeping it going."	

* From qualitative question 12.

AQIP
PEAQ

APPENDIX Q:
THEMES FROM QUALITATIVE SURVEY: IMPETUS FOR
ASSESSMENT-OF-LEARNING PROGRAM

THEMES FROM QUALITATIVE SURVEY

Impetus for Assessment

HIGH SCORING

CAO/ Institution	External Forces	Internal Forces	Institutional Response
Ms. Royse County Community College	"We knew that accountability was going to be the big term. In the last few years it's been growing for the next however long--...its coming from the Feds down to the States."	Bottom-up system and is faculty driven. "...the impetus comes more from the success we see we have than it does from that accountability issue, now."	"We've had to change quite a bit in education. Faculty have noticed there's much more need for paperwork from them and more evaluation of what they are doing--and improvement plans; but what really is important about that is we are measuring whether these students are learning, and our exit exams have been (except for just a couple of incidences) better than the national average." "... we have an assessment system that ... is a bottom-up system and is faculty driven, and it's working....that's just what we're aiming for."
Mr. Leroy High Plains Community College		"I would say the faculty because they are the ones that work with the students on a daily basis. They are the ones, the faculty and the student assessment committee."	
Dr. Friend Exploration Community College	"Certainly the motivation that comes from doing a self-study for regional reaccreditation." "There is a great deal of emphasis in this region as there is now in all regions of the country on learning assessment, so we were pushed into that arena" "On second campus, as CEO, sense of urgency from accreditation drove demand for someone to take care of assessment (Q3)*. The fact that a ten-year reaccreditation was coming influenced the way they began learning assessment (Q11)*."	Faculty involved in learning assessment initiatives were key to implementation of these programs.	"...then the fact that we developed a core group of faculty who were willing to take risks with their good names as excellent faculty, were respected by their peers, had become involved in learning assessment initiatives at the course level, the classroom level, general education learning level, and program level--were just key to implementing these programs."
Dr. Kosik Stone County Community College	"I really do believe that initially the incentive was the perceived external threat of accreditation withdrawal, or accreditation association backlash."	"...a lot of time has passed and the Association, North Central, at least, has really softened its approach maybe because most, if not all, of their thousand campuses got on board, but at the campus level I don't think anybody is concerned about accreditation anymore."	"Get a feel for what students are learning and how to improve programs. I think they've made them jump from 'have' to do assessment for accreditation to 'want' to do assessment to get a feel for what our students are learning and how we can improve our programs. So I think that is a major shift over time, but that is where we are now." CAO indicated the shift has been successful.
Dr. Wagnon State Community College	"...the honest answer to that is that the impetus comes from the Higher Learning Council, NCA for us, to institutionalize it or to look at it in a more formal way..." "Assessing students, is not a 'new concept, but the way that we have managed it institutionally the impetus definitely came from the Higher Learning Council to put together assessment plans that are then evaluated."		Not a new concept for faculty, but managed institutionally to put together assessment plans that are then evaluated.

*From qualitative questions 3 and 11.

THEMES FROM QUALITATIVE SURVEY

Impetus for Assessment

LOW SCORING

CAO/ Institution	External Forces	Internal Forces	Institutional Response
Dr. Kerr Regional Community College	"real or imagined requirements from the Higher Learning Commission." "I think there has been a lot of emphasis on assessment from the accreditation point of view." "... only the person heading the committee is motivated, ... others haven't had the opportunity for training at the HLC meetings" (Q8)*.	"... there is an internal curiosity from the academy, but I think the curiosity and reflection would be much more casual, much more relaxed, if it were the only factor driving the effort."	Trying to guess what HLC wants and then do it. "Giving us a twisted process."
Dr. Childs Area Community College	"First, I think the external accountability, whether federal or state, is a factor. The external accountability is a strong motivator for moving institutions to take a closer look at assessment of learning." The external factor is important because it keeps an institution working on curriculum and therefore is "a valuable connection."		"I think it makes a difference in how they talk about--look at, discuss, consider--courses and programs. I think it hones the discussion, keeps us working on curriculum. It is pretty difficult to have a discussion on assessment without having a discussion about curriculum."
Dr. Avers Western Community College	"...the initial impetus came out of our accreditation efforts over ten years ago when it became obvious that that was an important part of the accreditation process."		When the new president came, the institution switched to AQIP. This caused the college to look at the purpose of data collection and on continuous improvement. Now the CAO has stated that he feels the college "addresses helping students learn" He said, "It has brought this whole assessment effort [into focus] for me.... I think the AQIP process has really helped us in terms, of...seeing the need to make effective use of that process, not just gather the information but number one make sure the information gathered is meaningful. and on top of that, make sure it is used meaningfully."
Mr. Berg Sylvan Community College	PEAQ or the process has influenced the institution to make some changes "to meet those accreditation guidelines" (Q10)*.	"if you receive a ten-year accreditation and no stipulations, then you may drop the ball on it, and/or your faculty or staff may lose the interest in that program" (Q12)*. A consultant, formally from their institution and someone "who had numerous years of North Central experience," was hired after his retirement to help redefine the programs direction and vision.	Hired consultant that was a former employee. Simplified process, redefined direction and vision of where they need to go with assessment program.
Dr. Paxton Langston Community College	They have been a PEAQ institution and now are discussing AQIP.	Owe stakeholder some measure of credibility.	Not at the level they'd like to be. Emphasis has been the need to be as good an institution as they can. Starting to get more appreciation for being able to show that they are doing what they said.

*From qualitative questions 8, 10 and 12.

APPENDIX R:
THEMES FROM QUALITATIVE SURVEY: CEO TENURE

THEMES FROM QUALITATIVE SURVEY

CEO Tenure

HIGH SCORING

CAO/ Institution	Student Learning Advocacy & Support	Leadership Style & Personal Qualities	Assessment Knowledge & Experience
Ms. Royse County CC		"trusting that we are doing a good job" "appreciative of our reports"	"knowledgeable about what we are trying to do" "wanting to see a big picture--how is the whole college doing academically?"
Mr. Leroy High Plains Community College		Believes in the abilities and qualities of the people under him to get things done. Still trying to get a hand on what CEO's administrative skills are. Lot of leveraging. "He gives you the power and the authority to get things done, but you still have to make sure they are done according to his time line. I guess he's easy to work with, his management skills would be more people wise and everything."	President has been on board about two years.
Dr. Friend Exploration Community College	"A willingness on the part of the president to support all of the learning assessment initiatives on the campus, to refer to them publicly with pride, to speak about learning assessment in speeches to external audiences, to fund learning assessment initiatives and to support on-going learning assessment in the contract negotiation that included this language."		
Dr. Kosik Stone County Community College	Make sure assessment plan was in place before accreditation team arrived. On three campuses, CAO was one who was responsible, in two cases as an administrator and in one case as the CEO. As the CEO, "it was a sense of urgency to meet the demands of accreditation that drove [assessment of learning], and I think that was true for the presidents, both me and the other two campuses. . ."	Make sure assessment plan was in place before accreditation team arrived.	
Dr. Wagnon State Community College	Our president is absolutely committed to student learning as well. A keen interest in curriculum, very much a person who...is a former faculty person and just really is interested in that whole part of our interest enterprise, which we think is the heart of what we do.	Keen interest in curriculum. Looks at curriculum changes.	

THEMES FROM QUALITATIVE SURVEY

CEO Tenure

LOW SCORING

CAO/ Institution	Student Learning Advocacy & Support	Leadership Style & Personal Qualities	Assessment Knowledge & Experience
Dr. Kerr Regional CC			We've had a lot of turnover at the presidential level as well (Q8).
Dr. Childs Area Community College	"I would say for our CEO it is commitment to quality, pursuing quality for the institution and for the academic environment. The CEO has a real interest in students succeeding and being well prepared when they leave our institution." Commitment to quality, pursuing quality for the institution and for the academic environment. A real interest in students succeeding and being well prepared when they leave.		
Dr. Avers Western Community College	"I would say an interest in change, an interest in data-driven decision-making." The old assessment plan had become one that the college did just to meet accreditation standards, but the new president has "set us on a new direction in terms of being a little more conscientious about how we do things, that we just don't accumulate data for the sake of data, but we actually start to examine that data when we assess....the new president brings to the table a genuine concern in looking at that information and using that as a springboard for institutional improvement and improvement of instruction and student learning."	Interest in change and in data-driven decision-making. "A genuine concern in looking at . . . information and using that as a springboard for institutional improvement and improvement of instruction and student learning."	Have a new president entering third year.
Mr. Berg Sylvan Community College	Support the assessment process, has wholeheartedly pushed it by providing financial resources to do it right.	"...make sure that people are going to conferences and things that they need to increase their knowledge." "He knew how much money assessment needed to do it right -for people to attend conferences and to get the knowledge they needed, "... background knowledge and knowledge of what it takes to run a quality program has benefited the overall process."	Administrative experience with assessment from other institutions. Background knowledge and knowledge of what it takes to run a quality program.
Dr. Paxton Langston Community College			He is a product of public community colleges - -"we are a post-secondary, two-year private institution, so we don't fit the mold of most public community colleges."

*From qualitative question 8.

APPENDIX S:
THEMES FROM QUALITATIVE SURVEY: CAO TENURE

THEMES FROM QUALITATIVE SURVEY

CAO Tenure

HIGH SCORING

CAO/ Institution	Interpersonal Skills and Personal Qualities	Commitment to Student Learning	Assessment Training, Knowledge, & Experience
Ms. Royse County CC	Analytical. Wants assessment process to be bottom up, faculty driven.	Like to see outcomes. Wants to see the end of something.	Understands the assessment process.
Mr. Leroy High Plains Community College	Set deadlines for self and for other faculty. Expect things to be done on time.		Teaching abilities. Experience as project director: Wrote, directed, and evaluated grants. "I started off here...directing programs and from that...I did work with faculty and professional development technology wise, assessment wise, and curriculum wise."
Dr. Friend Exploration Community College	"The ability to create trust relationships with the teaching faculty is critically important. ...long term, mutually respectful relationships with faculty." "...relationships are just invaluable when you are creating change and people have to trust initially to actually know that what you are doing is not superficial; and once the change begins, then it's possible for faculty who are used to reading research to see that they are getting improvements in their students' learning, which is then self-motivating. In the beginning having mutually respectful relationships is really important, as is having credibility with the faculty. Over time people can see that you do what you say that you are going to do. Eventually, change is self-rewarding and perpetuating, which results in credibility, so that when you have to ask faculty to take risks again, there is a willingness to try."		Background in institutional research. Deep and long understanding of CC teaching & student learning. Intimacy with college curriculum. Background in institutional research. Long term mutually respectful relationships with faculty. Seventeen years at college has enabled the formation of relationships with faculty members.
Dr. Kosik Stone County Community College	"Takes some teaching abilities, patience, and some persistence to bring up an assessment program. "I think it was basically the experience I had and my general understanding of how to lead people towards a new objective."		"I'm thinking my years of experience in it are probably more central to the directions we've taken here. ...the last ... 25-6 years have been in institutions that are governed by the North Central Association, ... when ... the Higher Learning Commission began to take real interest in student learning outcomes and their measurement, ... I got in on the front end ... I went to workshops... learned from Trudy Banta and others early on, so I had the opportunity to bring up...three different institutional assessment programs."
Dr. Wagnon State Community College		...commitment to student learning, belief that assessment really matters, it can be used to show where there are gaps in learning, and where doing well.	"Having put together assessment plans in the past for other two-year campuses." Only been at institution eight months (Q8)*.

* From qualitative question 8.

THEMES FROM QUALITATIVE SURVEY

CAO Tenure

LOW SCORING

CAO/ Institution	Interpersonal Skills and Personal Qualities	Commitment to Student Learning	Assessment Training, Knowledge, & Experience
Dr. Kerr Regional Community College	"In the short term . . . trying to "help them see the bigger picture"(Q3)*. Talk with faculty "about assessment . . . in general education"(Q3)*. "Often they are just focused on . . . doing step one" keeping you from getting "around the cycle" and not accomplishing "anything that will . . . motivate them to go around the cycle again (Q3)*."	" . . . bureaucratic-centered as opposed to improvement-centered." "Need to jump through the hoops for accreditation." Quick turnover of two others before Kerr--a dean filling in and a VP (Q3)*. "I would say over the long run, one of the qualities or characteristics of the Chief Academic Officer position here has been a high degree of turnover, . . . a high degree of variability and perspective . . . (Q3)*. If there is a lot of turnover or a lot of passing this thing around, you never get on a track because you are constantly trying to decide to go another journey" (Q3)*. "There has been a lot of fluctuation. As result nobody has a very good vision of what they are trying to accomplish" (Q3)*. "I would say that a lot of . . . [where we are in the process] has been probably due to a lot of administrative turnover . . . I don't know that there has been as many people involved in . . . training, for instance" (Q8)*.	Trying to understand where they are with assessment. Peer reviewer for the HLC PEAQ system and has made visits for assessment. " More concerned about assessment for accreditation. Making sure courses accomplish what is hoped. The CAO has spent time talking with the faculty about assessment to help them see the various stages to help motivate them into going full cycle (Q3)*."
Dr. Childs Area Community College	Patience, and persistence.	Value student learning. Wants to know about progress in student learning. Assessment is a map of student learning. Wanting to know about progress in student learning.	
Dr. Avers Western CC		Comes from the instructional arm. Brings instructional focus and concern with student success to position.	CAO for only two years but a fair amount of institutional history. "Some say I have baggage." Been at the college 35 yrs. Familiar with institutional operation and history.
Mr. Berg Sylvan Community College	"I would say my rapport with the faculty has probably been the most beneficial trait that I've been able to bring to the table when it came to getting the assessment process spearheaded on campus." "Faculty respect me and respect that I'm doing what's right for the college. Not just assigning faculty busy work."		
Dr. Paxton Langston CC	"I try to be as inclusive as I possibly can in any kind of discussion, so it has been a collaborative discussion...."		"I would have to say that my experience at previous institutions and public community colleges has been a major factor...."

* From qualitative questions 3 and 8.

APPENDIX T:
THEMES FROM QUALITATIVE SURVEY:
CAO MANAGEMENT STYLE

THEMES FROM QUALITATIVE SURVEY

CAO Management Style

HIGH SCORING

CAO/ Institution	Expectations/Incentives	Management Style
Ms. Royse County Community College	"Rather have others be honest and direct." Appreciate competency and expect it. "encourage people to stretch themselves and to accept failure as a learning process." "I do understand the assessment process and want it to be from the bottom up, faculty driven..."	"I like to see team effort; I appreciate that kind of environment for the academic affairs area." "I appreciate competency and expect it." "I have an open door style. Anyone can approach me. I'd rather have them be honest and direct with me rather than ruminate until everything gets out of hand." I think I'm friendly and informal in a lot of ways. I really do encourage people to stretch themselves and to accept failure as a learning process."
Mr. Leroy High Plains Community College		"Not a manager per say." "I lead, but I allow people to make choices that need to be made.... I'm a situational manager whatever the situation is I find a way to work with it, deal with it. If it requires me to be the person in charge, I do so, If it requires me to be a team person, you know I do that, also."
Dr. Friend Exploration Community College	"... most of the initiatives have as the visible leader, a faculty leader, who has a relationship with me, as the chief academic officer." "... individuals in leadership positions are given autonomy and remuneration and credit for the work they do, and as a result, most of the initiatives have as the visible leader, a faculty leader, who has a relationship with me, as the chief academic officer."	"The organization is decentralized."
Dr. Kosik Stone County Community College	... "To get work done it needs to be delegated to individuals who have both the skill and the motivation to take on and complete the task." ... "size up the skills and the motivations of the people that I want to take on the tasks and then find incentives for them if they are not eager, find meaningful incentives, and some of those are more intangible than tangible--or ways to provide the skill set."	Accessible, very approachable, and available. "Find meaningful incentives to motivate people that are not eager to take on a task or provide the skill set then coach, and mentor." "Make sure that the big task is broken down into manageable pieces and the pieces are being accomplished." "I am very accessible, very approachable, very available for one thing, and I adhere strongly to the philosophy that to get the work done, it needs to be delegated to individuals who have both the skills and the motivation to take on and complete the task."
Dr. Wagnon State Community College		"I'm definitely participatory. My deans come to [me], we meet regularly, but I very much trust them to manage their budgets and their areas and take care of their business. I'm here for unusual situations primarily, very interested in what's going on, but I would not say I'm a micromanager."

THEMES FROM QUALITATIVE SURVEY
CAO Management Style

LOW SCORING

CAO/ Institution	Expectations/Incentives	Management Style
Dr. Kerr Regional Community College		"I tend to be a person who is very open, very interested in working with people as a group, share the information."
Dr. Childs Area Community College		"Collaborative, a relationship-oriented engagement. I firmly believe that there are differences in contribution capabilities, and as long as everyone is contributing and engaged, I think we all make progress."
Dr. Avers Western Community College		Consensus-building, deliberative.
Mr. Berg Sylvan Community College	Allow people "to have the final input in actually making it happen."	Allow people to get it done. Give guidance and advice. Allow people to have final input in actually making it happen. Allow people to have input. Lay out an expectation, "facilitate meetings to get people on the same page." Hands off, but provide direction. Take peoples ideas and let them be empowered.
Dr. Paxton Langston Community College		"I try to be as collaborative as I can. I try to work with people, I try to have patience in terms of making changes, and I have found over the years that a unilateral, instantaneous change does not last very long, usually."

APPENDIX U:
THEMES FROM QUALITATIVE SURVEY: QUALITIES OF PERSON WHO
MOST INFLUENCES ASSESSMENT-OF-LEARNING PROGRAM

THEMES FROM QUALITATIVE SURVEY

Person with Most Influence

HIGH SCORING

CAO/ Institution	Person with Most	Faculty Relations	Personal Qualities	Instructional Knowledge & Experience	Assessment knowledge & Experience
Ms. Royce County Community College	Dean of Instruction		Very detail and measurement oriented. Leads assessment committee. "Very competent. " "Wants to start at the beginning and come around."		Instrumental in setting up assessment committee. "Great deal" of knowledge about assessment.
Mr. Leroy High Plains Community College	Academic Dean (CAO)	Works with faculty on a daily basis. Does "all the class scheduling," and does "the college catalogue" with committee help.		"Masters in Higher Ed. Admin. " "head of academics standards committee which oversees ... student, faculty, and curriculum. " He heads up "faculty/curriculum team ..." "works ... with students on a daily basis," Works with other colleges & universities.	Three years of assessment team experience. Works with student evaluation assessment committees. Oversees "a lot of different types of committees that work with student evaluation and assessment"
Dr. Friend Exploration Community College	Chief Academic Officer	"a good relationship with faculty," particularly with a union faculty.	"Interpersonal skills are very important, particularly with an organized [union] faculty. " "Commitment to conducting research on student learning."	Good institutional research skills. Creates forms and templates.	Helps to have a research background. "do the kind of instruction that goes along with initiating a system of learning assessment on campus"
Dr. Kosik Stone County Community College	Chief Academic Officer	"at this stage the department chairs are making those determinations, but I generally do have some oversight. It's just at this stage I don't feel that I have to change directions with them much."			"role has been to teach faculty what assessment is all about, give them a better understanding of the extent to which assessment can vary by program, and the value of applying multiple methods of measurement"
Dr. Wagnon State Community College	Faculty	"... each division of our college works on assessment within that division, then it comes forward to my office."	"Passionate about student learning." Willingness to complete & track data. "Interest in improvement of the learning process."		"several years of training on how best to put together assessment methods."

THEMES FROM QUALITATIVE SURVEY

Person with Most Influence

LOW SCORING

CAO/ Institution	Person with Most	Faculty Relations	Personal Qualities	Instructional Knowledge & Experience	Assessment knowledge & Experience
Dr. Kerr Regional Community College	CAO (Informal) Faculty Chair of Assessment Committee (Formal)		Faculty member fairly motivated and has a strong interest in assessment. Focused on information technology.		Attended HLC meetings. Faculty member overbooked & ability to spend time on assessment is limited. CAO has background in the area from other institutions. CAO "can give some guidance to some of the areas that they are looking at to take some action"
Dr. Childs Area Community College	VP of Instruction (CAO)	"dynamic of working with assessment amongst faculty, programs, and administration."			Experience with AQIP. Experience with assessment project at another college. "Theoretical knowledge," "some practical application and experiences."
Dr. Avers Western Community College	VP of Academic Affairs (CAO)		Concern with student learning outcomes. A strong desire to see students succeed.	"Oversee, in general, the instructional focus of the institution."	
Mr. Berg Sylvan Community College	Director of Academic Assessment	Good rapport with faculty. Worked as faculty member and student advisor.	"very open-minded individual, very energetic, hardworking kind of person. . .really dedicated individual." Taking on the academic assessment process a personal thing.		Director of Assessment has been to HLC.
Dr. Paxton Langston Community College	Chief Academic Officer, Division Chairs, and faculty.		Commitment to assessment.	Use COMPASS for general education.	Believes expertise and background in assessment is important. Most faculty are discipline oriented. Don't have a lot of folks from trained education background.

APPENDIX V:
THEMES FROM QUALITATIVE SURVEY: FACULTY INVOLVEMENT IN
ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING

THEMES FROM QUALITATIVE SURVEY

Faculty Involvement

HIGH SCORING

CAO/ Institution	Faculty Involvement	Data-Driven Improvements
Ms. Royse County Community College	Full and part-time faculty are involved. Assessment committee is faculty. "Every faculty member meets with the Dean at least once a year to go over the outcomes." These are compiled into an outcomes report for all of the courses.	Outcomes dictate whether or not competencies are met or not which affects the Improvement Plan. "At the end of every course they [faculty] are doing planning on how they can do something different or better." CAO & Dean "meet with each faculty member, talk about what they're doing and give them a chance to be creative" (Q12)*.
Mr. Leroy High Plains Community College	Faculty involved in every aspect. Only general education part-time faculty are involved. Faculty use IPDP form for professional development, classroom development & research. CAO believes assessment program has really improved. Faculty's involved, including picking the Assessment Coordinator (Q12)*.	IPDP has helped faculty evolve into a very good assessment committee.
Dr. Friend Exploration Community College	Full and part-time faculty are involved. "Now everybody uses the same syllabus and the same learning assessment approach and then we collect results from all of the faculty on one learning assessment using the same shared rubric" ... " Faculty development activities almost all support learning assessment initiatives. At first this institution had a consultant..." "... but now the CAO reported that it works better to train faculty leaders and give them the support and development needed in order to write a class or teach to their peers for credit toward promotion. "I can't emphasize enough the importance of developing faculty leadership and giving them remuneration and... credit and putting them in the role of experts whenever a spokesperson is required" (Q12)*. Some part-time leaders do training because some courses are only taught by part-time faculty. Part-time faculty members are also compensated. All are recognized.	Strengthened instruction and student learning. Mandatory one week of in-service activity in August & January. "... we collect results from all of the faculty on one learning assessment using the same shared rubric and it really has raised the level of students' learning across all sections. It's created much more sharing among full and part-time faculty who teach the same courses, and it has greatly strengthened,... not just instruction, but student learning."
Dr. Kosik Stone County Community College	Most everybody gets involved sooner or later. Full-time are intimately involved at their department levels. Part-time are involved in the in-class assessment. Reports come from faculty. They determine "what they want to measure and how they are going to go about doing it." Departments work with part-time who teach same sections of developmental for consistent measurement. At spring retreat every body summarizes findings. Participation in assessment is in the faculty contract with tangible expectations and results (Q11)*.	
Dr. Wagnon State Community College	Faculty have been very much involved. A lot of rich discussion around the topic of assessment has helped faculty focus on the evaluation of what they do in the classroom. Some full-time involve part-time faculty but it is hit and miss at this point.	Making clear connections between outcomes and assessment. Tying outcomes back to pieces and parts within the course.

* Responses from qualitative questions 11 and 12.

THEMES FROM QUALITATIVE SURVEY

Faculty Involvement

LOW SCORING

CAO/ Institution	Faculty Involvement	Data-Driven Improvements
Dr. Kerr Regional Community College	Assessment committee run by faculty member. Part-time faculty not involved "to any significant degree."	Don't have a complete vision of assessment. Committee runs slow and CAO stated he thinks they are trying to "stay tied into faculty development," but he doesn't think that their development efforts have been satisfactory.
Dr. Childs Area Community College	"Involved at all levels, repeatedly." Faculty is involved in "discussion on program adjustments, enhancing program requirements, or introducing a new course, or preparing a program review." Part-time faculty are being introduced to the assessment process. In the next level of assessment, orientation of part-time faculty is planned.	
Dr. Avers Western Community College	Faculty involved in determining learning outcomes. Faculty driven process from the beginning. Nine outcomes areas were identified, a steering committee was formed, and sub committees were assigned to oversee each of the nine areas. Since then, some committees have continued in a strong matter. Others have not, but all along assessment has been faculty-driven. Vocational faculty are also very involved, having both an assessment matrix and rubric for each course. Part-time faculty is only partially involved, but one of the CAO's goals is to include adjunct part-time faculty. Some adjunct faculty do tend to want to assume an active role by getting more involved in these activities. In general part-time are not involved.	
Mr. Berg Sylvan Community College	Full-time and part-time faculty are involved in all stages: they have input at the classroom level because they are collecting the data, they have input through their division chair, and they have input with the steering committee (A Team) process to review the process and improve it.	Now the college is beginning to do a better job of using the data to improve learning. Working on improving data feedback to faculty. Report data to division chairs.
Dr. Paxton Langston Community College	Primarily full-time faculty. Hold monthly faculty forum with includes assessment. Just now starting at looking at course level assessment for faculty and program level assessment for chair persons of departments. "We have a preponderance of adjunct" and they are not really involved in assessment, other than "their own course assessment."	

APPENDIX W:
THEMES FROM QUALITATIVE SURVEY: ASSESSMENT-OF-LEARNING
LANGUAGE IN MISSION STATEMENT

THEMES FROM QUALITATIVE SURVEY

Language in Mission Statement

HIGH SCORING

CAO/Institution	Mission Language	Influence on Assessment
Ms. Royse County Community College	"Not at all." Only reference in mission statement is quality.	No language in mission statement. Assessment process is "aimed at providing ... quality education in a continual fashion." Assessment committee doesn't think much about the mission statement as they work on getting data.
Mr. Leroy High Plains Community College		Expect faculty to read and utilize information on assessment that is placed in the library.
Dr. Friend Exploration Community College	"empowering people by raising aspirations and fostering achievement through dynamic compassionate and responsible learning experience."	"fostering achievement through responsible learning experience" means assessing student learning. Interpreted to mean that one teaches the course and then assess the students' learning to find out... "if they have learned."
Dr. Kosik Stone County Community College	Talk about being a "learning college." Have a mission statement, values statement and strategic directives.	No language included.
Dr. Wagnon State Community College	Assessment is a piece.	Go back to the mission statement and know that assessment of learning is a "critical piece of what we do." It has reinforced assessment of learning. Point to the mission statement often. "The campus' mission statement is kind of our umbrella learning outcome that we want to tie things back to."

LOW SCORING

CAO/Institution	Mission Language	Influence on Assessment
Dr. Kerr Regional Community College		If it was an obvious element maybe more discussion & expectations. "President does a pretty good job keeping mission statement in front of people."
Dr. Childs Area Community College		CAO stated that assessment is "easy to talk about. It's actively engaging assessment that is a challenge."
Dr. Avers Western Community College		"I don't know that it has made a recognizable difference." New president has led the staff in a collaborative process to redefine the mission statement and vision. The CAO expects more of this.
Mr. Berg Sylvan Community College		Don't know that it has affected the assessment program. Inclusion may show faculty & staff that administration is serious about it.
Dr. Paxton Langston Community College		"Probably has had a fairly significant impact" but the CAO is "not sure that there has been...an appreciation for standards that assessment has tried to evaluate."

Excluded	
Included	

APPENDIX X:
THEMES FROM QUALITATIVE SURVEY: BUDGET GUIDELINES

THEMES FROM QUALITATIVE SURVEY

Budget Guidelines

HIGH SCORING

CAO/ Institution	Who Makes Assessment Budget	Process & Guidelines	Budget Use
Ms. Royse County Community College	CAO and Dean of Instruction.	"...it's staff oriented and committee oriented."	Sent people to conferences on assessment. COMPASS test for mandatory placement and exit exams for academic and tech programs.
Mr. Leroy High Plains Community College	CAO and Comptroller.	CAO is not sure what the guidelines are. For CAO area, based on prior years. "We are increasing the assessment part to fit"	"We do set aside \$15,000 that goes specifically to the student assessment committee. Out of that, half of that is paid for an assessment coordinator for a year, the rest is used to purchase test materials: For instance, we do work with CAPP and professional development in that area to send a team to various assessment professional development workshops, if need be."
Dr. Friend Exploration Community College	Negotiated between "faculty association and the college."	Mutual agreement between "faculty association and the college."	Funds are set aside each "year that would be used to support faculty initiatives and learning assessment. Beyond that, there is an expectation that learning assessment is being conducted at every level of learning on this campus and so every budget on the campus is spending some money on learning assessment, but only one budget, \$40,000 a year, is being used to actually compensate faculty, either directly or both directly and in terms of faculty development for their engagement in learning assessment."
Dr. Kosik Stone County Community College	Departments	"annually the departments analyze their assessment data, determine what kind of changes they want to make, either to the way they are conducting assessment, perhaps how they are measuring, or to the delivery of instruction based on the data and will make a best guess about what the budget implication to such changes would cost." Use template to discuss budget implications. Even though this analysis comes after the budget for the next year, it has a "residual effect in upcoming budget cycles."	
Dr. Wagnon State Community College	CAO	Zero based budgeting. Assessment is a "line item that is critical." "Each year we talk about assessment. We just had our budget discussions that a percentage of our total budget, it's not going to be a high percentage, that would go into a line item that specifically says assessment."	"...primarily for faculty to attend conferences that may lend itself [sic] to helping them either improve the way they are doing assessment or validate what they are doing."

THEMES FROM QUALITATIVE SURVEY

Budget Guidelines

LOW SCORING

CAO/ Institution	Who Makes Assessment Budget	Process & Guidelines	Budget Use
Dr. Kerr Regional Community College	Lot of administrative turnover	No formal budget process yet.	The institution does have the CAPP test and "some of those things."
Dr. Childs Area Community College		"I don't know that any new dollars were directed at assessment." "With assessment it "has been tacked on to what educators are already doing." Educational institutions have not "grasped the magnitude of the workload that completing assessment requires."	They do have the CAPP test or COMPASS test.
Dr. Avers Western Community College		Year by year on what we feel is necessary. A lot of assumptions in ongoing budget operations. "... we haven't traditionally set aside specific pools of money for the assessment process."	"I think we just assumed a lot of those functions within the context of our ongoing budget operations."
Mr. Berg Sylvan Community College	Upper administration determines amount.	The administrators have taken "a percentage of the total faculty travel budget. We took that and doubled it...and made it \$40,000 a year to apply for assessment purposes." This was a good figure and has allowed the college to maintain the program, but the CAO expects that this figure will need to be increased in the future.	Travel for assessment conferences for faculty or staff. Salary for part-time consultant. Supplies and testing for the assessment program.
Dr. Paxton Langston Community College	Registrar keeps track of what is being used for assessment.	"Don't think we have any guidelines. Identify what we need to do and make it available." Identify needs and make it available. The registrar keeps track of what is used for assessment.	