University-Wide Assessment of Student Learning

As the scope of assessment is widened, it involves multiple committees and academic programs in a well planned and organized cycle. Central to this process is the central collection point or person for the data and the accountability of committees and academic divisions for reporting, disseminating, and publishing the summative results of the assessments.

Aims of University-Wide Assessment:

- Provide a continuous source of essential information for instructional improvement and assessment of student academic achievement.
- Provide information for making institutional decisions about budget, strategic planning, faculty development, and program changes.
- Provide a framework for the assessment of Abilities across academic programs.
- Provide a well-planned systematic process for data collection.

Ability Assessment and Undergraduate Assessment of Student Learning

Ability Assessment at VCSU is designed to develop an overall understanding of student achievement in each Ability. The Abilities provide a framework for examining changes in student learning from initial work through the General Education courses, the academic programs, and the Senior Portfolio. University-wide Ability assessment allows the University to:

- Demonstrate the development of each of the eight Abilities during the undergraduate educational experiences at VCSU
- Assure a consistent educational experience for all students
- Assess learning experiences in General Education courses and strengthen the links between General Education and the major programs
- Effectively provide data for Institutional Review and Curriculum Planning

The Process of University-Wide Assessment

University-wide assessment is as follows:

1) Student Ability survey is conducted in the fall for the incoming freshmen, in the spring with upper level general education students, and both fall and spring with graduating seniors. The surveys were implemented fall 2009 for the purpose of showing students’ perceived growth.

2) Ability projects are assessed at the General Education level and again at the senior level by three-member Assessment teams using rubrics to evaluate the projects. The Curriculum Committee oversees the assessment of General Education while the campus Assessment Committee initiates the assessment of senior projects. This assessment provides data to show vertical student growth from freshman through senior year.

3) Portfolios are required of every graduating senior. The portfolios are based on the eight Abilities. Assessment forms are completed each semester by the faculty in the student’s academic major. The portfolio review provides programs with information about student growth in their areas and provides validation of the Abilities project assessment.

University-wide Assessment uses the information gathered from student surveys, the Ability Assessment teams, the Senior portfolios, and a variety of other survey instruments. The results from these various assessment measures are made available to academic units throughout the institution.
Figure 5: University-Wide Assessment

Figure 5 illustrates that the Assessment Committee, APAC, and the Executive Team apply the data to the strategic planning process and budget decisions. The Curriculum Committee, the General Education Faculty, and the division chairs also use the data for program improvement and classroom assessment.

University-wide assessment may result in budget and strategic planning adjustments, course modifications, changes in faculty assignments, other curricular decisions, and faculty development opportunities.

**Principal Indicators for Institutional Assessment:**

A. University-wide Ability Assessment
   a. Student Ability Survey
   b. Rubric for General Education and Senior project assessment
   c. Rubric for Senior Portfolio
   d. NSSE (National Survey of Student Engagement)
   e. Noel Levitz Surveys

B. Academic departments and programs
   a. Program reviews
   b. Student Learning Outcomes
   c. NSSE Student Engagement Survey by major

VCSU provides resources and support for the assessment process through:
- regular trainings, workshops, and Summer Institute activities
- faculty development resources that assist individuals and departments working to develop or improve assessment activities
- a VPAA office that enhances effective decision making and fosters accountability by integrating the planning and budgeting process with the results of assessment
- Availability of mini-grants for research and evaluation designed by individuals, majors, or departments
- Maintenance of data that is summarized and published annually