

# Improving the Assessment Process

## Recommendations passed by the Assessment Committee on March 29, 2005

The purpose of the Assessment Committee, according to the Faculty Handbook (2001– 05), is “to ensure that the University fully develops and implements an ongoing, systematic Assessment program....” Although progress in assessment has been made since 1993, we believe that the goal of systematic and ongoing assessment remains elusive. Furthermore, two objectives of the Assessment Committee are “To advise the University Senate and Academic Vice President on assessment matters” and “To facilitate assessment programs on an institutional, school, and program level.”

WestConn’s 2006 mandatory report to NEASC necessitates that all programs, departments and schools engage in a thorough assessment process. After NEASC scrutiny subsides, it is likely that assessment efforts will also subside, unless sufficient resources are allocated. Obstacles to systematic and ongoing assessment include insufficient time, workload pressures, and inadequate budgets. Adequate assessment requires that sufficient resources be made available to the individuals responsible for conducting the assessments. For example, CSU Learning Assessment and Improvement Grants are available for pilot projects, but not for the ongoing evaluation of student portfolios. Therefore, the Assessment Committee offers the following general suggestions for strengthening WestConn assessment efforts.

1. We recommend annual budgets for departmental assessment efforts, allowing for purchase of appropriate instruments, software, hardware, and supplies. For example, assessment instruments must be purchased or developed. Moreover, storage space for paper and electronic samples of student work is often inadequate. At least three program objectives should be addressed each year, and analysis of the corresponding data (qualitative and/or quantitative) can be time consuming for programs with many majors.
2. We recommend revision of the current annual assessment schedule to a cycle in which each department reports their cumulative assessment efforts once every three or four years. Note that assessment data must be collected annually, and changes in curricula and/or instruction that have resulted from ongoing assessment should be reported as they occur. Historically, workload relief has been granted to departments and schools pursuing accreditation and reaccreditation, as well as to faculty with major responsibilities for NEASC self studies. We propose scheduling reassigned time so that every department will know when to expect workload relief for assessment activities.
3. We recommend reassigned time within each assessment cycle for individual faculty members conducting department assessment activities, such as data collection and analysis, as well as for faculty assessment coordinators.
4. In consideration of the University’s mission, we recommend that faculty contributions to assessment be given full recognition in promotion and tenure decisions.

We urge all Senators to discuss these concerns with colleagues in their departments and schools. Finally, we urge the Senate to pass a resolution of support for the recommendations listed above.