

Pacific University Assessment Plan

A Proposal to the Faculty Senate

March 12, 2008

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Executive Summary

The University Assessment Plan helps to ensure that the University's mission is carried out effectively across the colleges. The Plan capitalizes on assessment efforts already underway to bring the mission to the fore across diverse programs and students. It uses assessment results to drive program improvement by involving the University community in an open process of goal-setting, review, and change implementation.

The Plan's assessment dimensions are derived from the mission and vision statements and are expressed in a three-dimensional matrix of: 1) assessment dimensions by 2) colleges by 3) six-column process model. Program review at the college, school, or department level is expected and required for this Plan to work (see Appendix for general matrix outline). The Plan will evolve with the University and remain current in its methods, commitments, and impact on student learning.

Assessment Philosophy

The Plan is a living document that guides efforts, resources, and commitments and includes obligations to review and to develop further the assessment efforts described below. The Plan's purpose is to provide a unified approach to assessing the effectiveness of the University to deliver on its mission across the four colleges. The Plan should grow to encompass administrative units, as well.

The University exists for student learning, and the Assessment Plan supports pursuit of this core principle. The Plan reinforces the understanding of assessment as cyclical and a force brought about through community effort to deliver on the University's mission. This dynamic is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Cyclical Assessment Process and Student Benefit



Description of Planned Assessment Procedures

Assessment Dimensions Derived from Mission and Goals

An analysis of the University mission, value statement, and the 2010 Strategic Plan led to posing two questions: What do we expect to happen to students as a result of their experience at Pacific University, regardless of program of study? How should the University strive to achieve these outcomes?

The University's mission must be made concrete and measurable through an identification of goals and outcomes. Goals define what the University seeks to accomplish; outcomes specify

certain abilities, attitudes, and knowledge expected in students. Assessment measures the extent to which the ability, attitude, or knowledge exists.

Assessment criteria indicate whether the goal has been achieved, in terms of a percentage score or a rate of growth or improvement over a baseline. Given that a goal may impact more than one of the three dimensions and that the outcomes themselves are multidimensional, it is good practice to use more than one method of assessment for an outcome. Figure 2 shows how these concepts are related.

Figure 2. Relationship of the University Mission to Assessment Measures



Analysis of University Mission and Vision

A mission statement “defines the core purpose of the organization”; a vision statement “gives a broad, aspirational image that an organization is aiming to achieve.” Therefore, decisions made and actions taken should keep the University in-line with its mission, while moving towards its vision. Mission and vision statement claims are organized below by 1) what will occur as a result of attending Pacific University, 2) what our students will do as a result of attending Pacific, and 3) what we claim we provide in order to achieve numbers 1 and 2.

1) Will occur as a result of attending Pacific University

- Personal growth and development

- Passion for learning
- Student understanding of
 - themselves
 - their discipline
 - their world
- Student preparation for
 - rigors of graduate or professional study
 - demands of employment
 - complexities of a thoughtful life
- Critical thinkers
- Discovery of multiple pathways between current studies and future goals

2) Our students will do the following as a result of attending Pacific

- Become life-long learners
- Make informed decisions
- Make valuable contributions to society and the world
- Contribute substantially to health promotion (CHP & Opt.)
- Contribute substantially to maximizing triumphs over disease and disability (CHP & Opt.)
- Advance student learning (COE)
- Become agents of change in leadership positions in local and regional educational communities (COE)

3) Pacific University will provide in order to achieve the goals above

Curricular:

- Dynamic classroom experiences
- Dynamic curricula
- Close faculty-student interactions
- Service learning
- International education
- Internships
- Research
- Co-curricular activities

- Integrated advising methods
- Consistently revitalized programs
- Bridges among our schools and colleges
- Opportunities for students, faculty, and staff to transform their lives by becoming more informed, more equipped, and more involved citizens and professionals

Environment:

- Attractive, state-of-the-art facilities (environment of beauty)
- Comfortable and unpretentious atmosphere
- Pluralistic campus (diversity among members)
- Strategically managed enrollment growth
- Solid financial underpinnings
- Environment where thoughtful debate among learners flourishes
- Strong sense of community
- Engaged campus

The mission and vision statement claims revealed two dimensions of success that provide the framework for the Assessment Plan:

1. ***Student Success*** – Student success represents effectiveness of the academic program and the University as a whole and can be measured during the academic program and after the student leaves the University.
 - *Program Success* – How well are students able to perform during their academic program? Assessments may include success rates, test scores, etc.
 - *Post-Program Success* – How successful are students after they leave Pacific University? Assessments may include job/graduate school placement numbers, alumni survey data, supervisor evaluations, etc.
2. ***Engagement*** – We can measure faculty and student engagement on a number of levels within and outside the University.
 - *Programmatic Engagement* – To what extent are students and faculty engaged in the academic program? Assessments may include program function attendance, hours of volunteer work for program, etc.

- *University Engagement* – To what extent are students and faculty engaged members of the University community outside of their programs? Assessments may include university function attendance, student perception surveys, etc.
- *Community Engagement* – To what extent are students and faculty engaged in the surrounding community? Assessments may include community volunteer hours, community perception survey data, etc.
- *Professional Engagement* – To what extent are students and faculty engaged in their disciplines outside of the University? Assessments may include professional association membership numbers, conference presentations, etc.

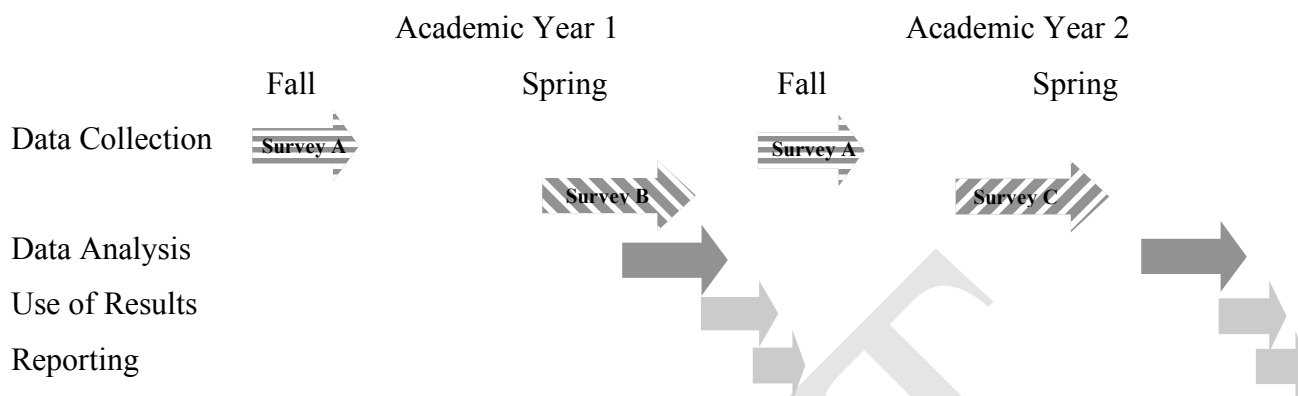
Level of Assessment within Scope

Because the intent of the Plan is to provide a high-level assessment of the University's mission, the focus is on the colleges. Existing assessment efforts may provide the majority of their responses to the University Plan. The colleges will systematically summarize the results across schools and departments. For example, a department may set a goal that 95% of its students demonstrate learning in their discipline as measured by a standardized assessment of capstone projects. In turn, the college may set a goal that 100% of its departments reach or exceed their goals for student learning as measured by a summary of the department results.

Description of Institutional Assessment Cycle

The assessment cycle consists of data collection and reporting timelines, allowing flexibility in the annual reporting cadence that may include components occurring in alternating years; however, the assessment report is produced every year and covers results generated in that time. The assessment cycle must synchronize with faculty and student availability to ensure that the plan is implemented. Such a schedule is depicted in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Assessment Activities Timeline



Assessment Plan Matrix

Matrix Dimensions and Overview

Plan Matrices provide a concentrated overview of core assessment components. The Plan will eventually include six matrices, one for each Assessment Framework Category. A general example of this matrix is included in the Appendix.

There are five questions: what, why, who, how, and when. “What” includes the title of the assessment measurement and the criteria for success. “Why” is an explanation of the purpose of the measure and its relationship to the Category. “Who” is the person, office, or committee that has responsibility for that measure. “How” is a brief description of methods used to administer the measure. “When” is the timeline for assessment administering.

Use of Assessment Results

Review Cycles

While the Assessment Matrix details the criteria for success, application of results is crucial for the self-assessment process. Results should be used to review success by each department, school, and college. Reviews should produce clear documentation of the use of the data collected and the changes brought about through assessment.

Review of assessment data should occur regularly. Annually, units should discuss the data gathered in the previous year and should produce a brief summary of those data. Quadrennially, units should conduct a more extensive review that results in a comprehensive report and action-plan development.

Documentation of Review and Use of Results

Results inform a regular process of reflection about the program, its goals and mission, and the University's mission. That results be used in a meaningful way is key to the value of assessment.

Good documentation of deliberations and decisions helps to ensure consistent implementation of improvement plans, serves as a laboratory notebook that may offer revelations that were not initially apparent, and demonstrates our commitment to assessment.

Documentation includes meeting minutes, reports, memos, formal plans, and report cards.

Content needed in a one- and four-year assessment is included in the Appendix, along with a sample "report card."

Review, Application, and Monitoring of Assessment Results

Reporting and Results-Based Action Plan

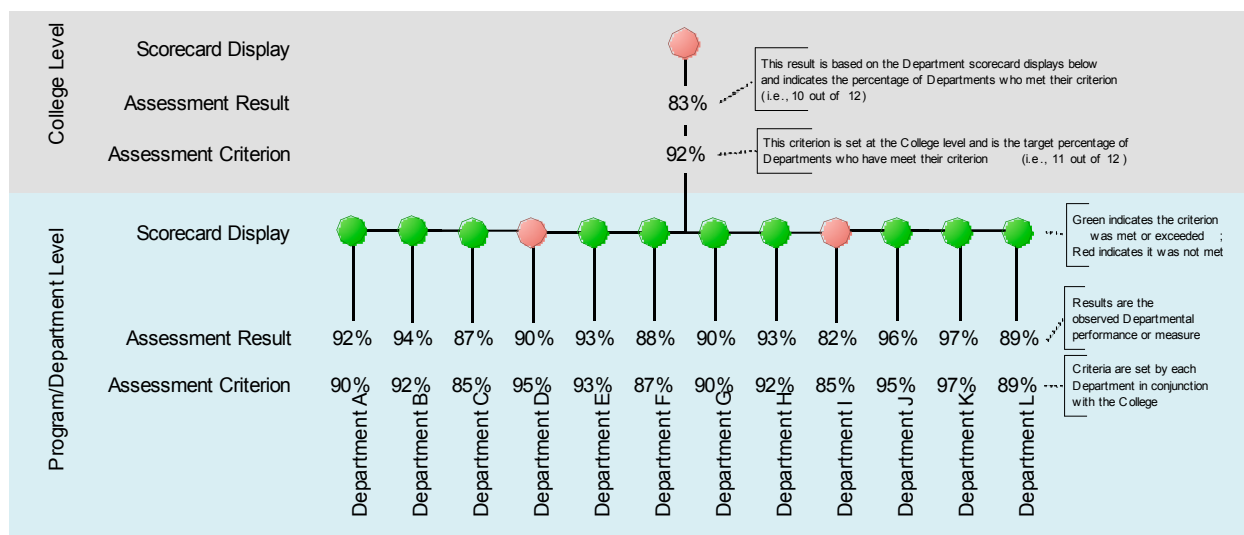
The first venue for assessment results is within the program. Results should be reviewed in light of the criteria for those measures to determine whether the outcome meets the goal. When there are deficiencies, an action plan and timeline are developed to help meet the goal.

For the next level, each college should devise a method to aggregate results. For example, the college could add-up a binary tally of goal attainment (e.g., attained = 1, below criterion = 0) and set a college-level goal of 98% attainment among its programs. The end result should be a systematic summary of program-level results that can be evaluated against a college-level criterion or rubric

For example, Figure 4 illustrates two levels of assessment, the department (or program) level and the college level (a more detailed illustration is provided in the Appendix).

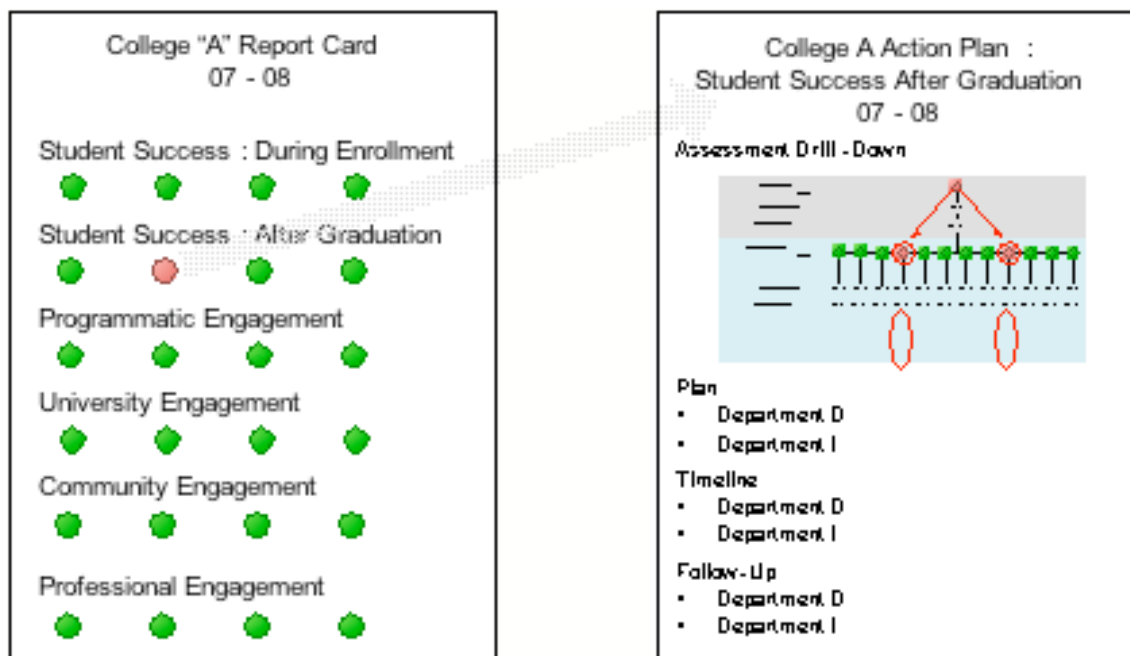
Each department sets a performance measure, e.g., 90%. Evaluation is conducted, and the result is compared to the criterion. The display in Figure 4 is a graphic representation of the department results that can be reported to the college as either "green" for results at or above the criterion and "red" for results under the criterion.

Figure 4. Aggregating Department Results to a College Assessment and Criterion



In the example in Figure 4, the college set its criterion at 92%, or 11 of 12 departments have to meet their goals in order for the college to meet its goal. However, only 10 of 12 departments met their goals, so the 83% result is below the college’s criterion.

This aggregation should result in a report card that lays out all of the six assessment dimensions and provides a high-level view of where the results have met the criteria at the college-level and where further action is planned. Action plans should address challenges faced by departments. This is illustrated in Figure 5.

Figure 5. Report Card and Action Plan Relationship

Peer Review of Results and Action Plans

A crucial Plan component is engagement of the Curriculum & Standards Committee and the university community, providing at least three benefits: 1) a forum for the colleges to present their results and action plans to their colleagues, 2) an opportunity for the colleges to benefit from feedback, 3) visibility of university assessment efforts.

The Curriculum & Standards Committee—comprised of faculty, deans, and administrators from across the University—provides a valuable forum for those preparing assessment reports. The Committee's role is to maintain the integrity and rigor of the Plan. The Committee ensures that colleges make progress toward their goals.

The final destination of the documents of goals, outcomes, assessment plans, measures, annual reports, action plans, follow-up plans, and results should be a system that is accessible to the university community.

Roles in Implementation

Commitment and Accountability

The Plan provides a way for the University to ensure that it is delivering on its mission. It obligates members of the university community to a regular timeline of assessment, program

review, reporting, and follow-up, as well as obligates the Curriculum & Standards Committee to participate in review, recommendation, and assurance.

Faculty Role in Design and Implementation

Faculty involvement in assessment is crucial to the Plan's success. Therefore, when assessments are undertaken, the results are familiar and meaningful. When new measures are required to support the Plan, faculty should be engaged in the development or selection process.

Faculty support in the implementation of this Plan is also crucial to its success. Faculty effort is required throughout the assessment cycle from planning to measuring to using the results. This requirement for faculty involvement is key to providing transparency and accessibility in the Plan.

Dean and Administration Roles

The role of the deans is to provide support, coordinate assessment work, and ensure adherence to the Plan. Some support may include providing course releases or supplemental pay to faculty members who take leadership roles in the process. Coordination includes ensuring that assessment plans are carried out. Finally, the deans provide oversight and motivation to fulfill requirements of the Plan.

The role of the administration is similarly to provide support and to ensure that problems are resolved. This support should include a commitment to the process and its importance.

Personnel and Funding Commitments

Commitments of people and funds are important manifestations of University support for assessment. As this plan builds on current efforts, the hope is that requirements are minimal. However, release time for faculty members may be required to enable the preparation of materials detailed in the Review Specifics portion of the matrices.

Other considerations include centralized measures and the infrastructure required to support this effort. Time for development and funds for purchasing university-wide measures should be supported through regular budget items. Also, technology—such as a server to hold data, reports, and other documents—must be included to make the process transparent and accessible. Future developments may include investment in data aggregation, analysis, and scorecard presentation software, reducing the burden by automating some of the process.

University Assessment Plan Evaluation

Cycle for Plan Evaluation

The University Assessment Plan should continue to evolve. To ensure dynamic progression, guidance for when to seek input, review, and rewrite the Plan is included. The expectation is that the Plan will be reviewed every five years, allowing enough time to observe the cycle of assessment and results application described in this Plan. This schedule should allow some stability of the process and minimize the impact of short-term considerations. Feedback over the course of this period should be gathered as the schools and colleges interact with the Plan.

Roles and Forum for Evaluation

The primary forum for Plan evaluation should be the Curriculum & Standards Committee. In general, this Committee will have the most experience with the Plan and the effect it is having across the University. The Provost may engage a broader committee to review the Plan in order to incorporate different perspectives, also relieving the burden on the Curriculum & Standards Committee.

A Commitment to Assessment and Its Continued Evolution at Pacific University

The Plan is a means to further Pacific's practice and ownership of assessment and to hold ourselves accountable. The tools, timelines, and touch points in this Plan enable the University Community to review regularly and objectively what we are doing in light of the priorities of our mission, vision, and strategic plans.

As the University continues to evolve, so too will this Plan. The process of review inherent in the Plan is important to maintain its relevance and impact. It is expected that this review will become a model and a driver of review and development among assessment plans across the University.

Transformation is an important part of the Pacific experience. Assessment is a way that the university community can effect transformative development on the University itself. By embracing this Plan and other assessment plans and projects, we can all play active roles in pursuing Pacific's vision and providing the best education for our students.

Appendix

Pacific University Mission

Pacific University is a comprehensive teaching institution comprised of the Colleges of Arts and Sciences, Optometry, Education, and Health Professions. We provide a close-knit environment and challenging opportunities that foster undergraduate education in the liberal arts tradition and graduate education for specific service-oriented professions. At Pacific, effective teaching and learning are the highest priorities. Our faculty of scholars is dedicated to instilling in our students a passion for learning through dynamic curricula and close faculty-student interaction. Pacific creates critical thinkers who become life-long learners who can make informed decisions and valuable contributions to society and the world.

Pacific University Vision Statement

With a venerable and rich liberal arts tradition in the College of Arts and Sciences, a nationally accredited and regionally acclaimed College of Education, and world renowned Colleges of Health Professions and Optometry, Pacific University presents a distinctive combination of learning opportunities that has risen to national prominence and significance. Faculty and staff work with students to weave together dynamic classroom experiences, service learning, international education, internships, research, and co-curricular activities. Pacific also seeks to provide opportunities for personal growth and development, creating living tapestries of understanding about themselves, their disciplines, and their world.

Students in the College of Arts and Sciences are prepared for the rigors of graduate or professional study, the demands of employment, and the complexities of a thoughtful life through an innovative curriculum based in the liberal arts that embraces the whole individual. Integrated advising methods help students discover multiple pathways between current studies and future goals, and bridges among our schools and colleges allow many to remain at Pacific University from freshman year through advanced degrees. Students in the Colleges of Health Professions and Optometry experience a unique interdisciplinary approach and unrivaled blend of programs. Graduating with exemplary clinical skills and innovative approaches to evolving health care issues, they contribute substantially to health promotion and to maximizing triumphs over disease and disability. As vanguards for the future, graduates of the College of Education advance student learning, and become agents of change as they assume leadership positions in local and regional educational communities.

Pacific University provides attractive, state-of-the-art facilities for living and learning in an environment of beauty. Administrators and staff join faculty in their dedication to students and promote a comfortable and unpretentious atmosphere. The University enjoys a pluralistic campus reflected by diversity among its members, thus enhancing its role as a cultural and educational center. Strategically managed enrollment growth insures that programs are consistently revitalized, that financial underpinnings remain solid, and that thoughtful debate among a society of learners flourishes.

By staying true to its unique history, strong sense of community, and tradition of enhancing student experiences in remarkable ways, Pacific University enjoys a national

reputation for transforming individual lives and enriching the quality of life wherever its graduates may be found.

Our core values remain essentially unchanged. Pacific aspires to becoming a truly engaged campus, providing opportunities for students, faculty, and staff to transform their lives by becoming more informed, more equipped, and more involved citizens and professionals to the world around them.

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A Further Illustration of Aggregating Assessment Efforts to the College Level

