

The Office of Curriculum, Accreditation and Assessment

# Institutional Effectiveness

## An Assessment Update

### Program Review Update

#### Programs Currently under Review

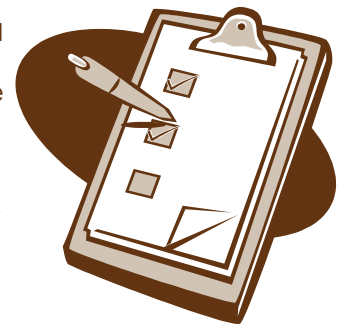
- Physics
- Chemistry
- Geology
- Philosophy
- Anthropology
- Geography
- History
- Sociology
- Radiologic Technology
- Respiratory Technology

Beginning in 2004, NKU revised policies and procedures for academic program review and reinitiated the process. The major purposes of program review are to enhance the quality of academic programs and to provide guidance for academic planning and support decisions. According to the policy, all academic programs are to be reviewed on a five year cycle. Five programs participated in the process during the 2004-2005 academic year and ten more are currently being reviewed.

Program review involves a five step process that begins with a detailed self-study by program faculty. The self-study takes 6 - 9 months to complete and results in a 12-15 page document that is forwarded to the program's dean. The dean consults with the program, prepares a response to the self study document, and forwards it to the Program Review Steering Committee. This committee consists of faculty representatives from each college and from the departments of each program being reviewed. It's task is to review the self-study report and prepare a summary and recommendations to include with the self-study as it is sent to the provost. Finally, once the program faculty, chair, and dean have had a chance to respond to the committee's recommendations, the provost meets with the program's representatives and dean to determine what actions are to be taken.

Information to aid programs in completing their self-study can be found on the Program Review web page (<http://programreview.nku.edu>) maintained by the Office of Curriculum, Accreditation, and Assessment.

This web page includes a link to an Outline for Self-Study which describes the format to be used and questions to be addressed. Much of the self-study involves delineating the program's mission and goals in the areas of instruction, scholarship, and public engagement/service, relating these to the university's mission and goals, and then providing evidence that the goals are being effectively carried out. Particularly important is a section on instructional effectiveness, which includes information on the program's curriculum, enrollment, and faculty, as well as the identification and assessment of specific learning outcomes/goals for its students.



Four additional sections are included in the self-study; one describes the program's student involvement and student satisfaction; a second examines the adequacy of its facilities, equipment, and library resources; the third compares the programs to NKU's benchmark institutions; finally the program's future plans are described.

Consistent with its purposes, the program review process can give the provost and dean important information about the various programs, and also help programs begin to prepare for SACS reaffirmation. In addition, program review will force programs to look more closely at themselves, especially in two important areas:

- (a) examining the program mission and goals and understanding how resources are aligned to accomplish them and
- (b) identifying student learning outcomes and methods for assessing them.

Jim Thomas, Ph.D.  
Professor of Psychology

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## NSSE Survey Results Are In!



National Survey of Student Engagement

NKU participated in the NSSE in 2001, 2003 and 2005.

The NSSE is a national survey administered each spring to random samples of students at public and private four-year colleges and universities.

The results provide an estimate of how undergraduates spend their time and what they gain from attending college. Survey items represent empirically confirmed "good practices" in undergraduate education and reflect behaviors by students and institutions that are associated with the desired outcomes of a college education.

NSSE groups the results into five key areas or "benchmarks" which are intended to focus discussions about the importance of student engage-

ment and guide institutional improvement efforts.

To create the benchmarks, NSSE grouped specific questions into five clusters or benchmarks expressed on a 100 point scale. The five benchmarks used to measure effective educational practice are: LEVEL OF ACADEMIC CHALLENGE, ACTIVE AND COLLABORATIVE LEARNING, STUDENT-FACULTY INTERACTION, ENRICHING EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES, AND SUPPORTIVE CAMPUS ENVIRONMENT.

The benchmark clusters reduce the survey's more than 60 questions to a handful of self-evident concepts. The five benchmarks are based on a select group of 40 questions. Campuses use NSSE results

to stimulate conversations about how to enhance student learning and improve collegiate quality. The Office of Curriculum, Accreditation and Assessment plans to visit with every Department on campus to discuss the NSSE results in further detail.

Results from the NSSE have been analyzed and are posted by College and are further broken down by Department and posted at: <http://access.nku.edu/oca/nsse/nsse-survey.htm>

*"Campuses use NSSE results to stimulate conversations about how to enhance student learning and improve collegiate quality."*

**WATCH THE WEBSITE FOR REPORTS FROM NKU BENCHMARK UNIVERSITIES IN EARLY MARCH!**

## Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) 2009



Accreditation is a process of multiple paths and challenges.

Mention the term SACS on a college campus, and you're likely to hear a resounding chorus of loud groans and witness a swift exodus of those who might be asked to participate.

Academicians who have endured one of the decennial exercises are apt to remember them as lengthy ordeals that seldom, if ever, produce anything of lasting value except reams of paper.

Since NKU's last SACS review in 1998, the process has changed dramatically. The current SACS reaffirmation process is a collaborative, campus-wide effort to showcase our strides toward excellence.

The SACS review process is an opportunity to revitalize our efforts at innovating and assessing our approaches to teaching, research, scholarship, and service-enriching our students and intellectual community even further.

More information about the SACS reaffirmation process and a timeline is available at: <http://access.nku.edu/sacs> .

Look for more articles on SACS reaffirmation in future newsletters.



# Student Learning Outcomes (SLO)

## Just what are these “student learning outcomes that we hear about all over campus?”

SLO are specific statements that describe the required learning competencies that students must demonstrate in order to attain their degrees and fulfill the goals of their particular program. Student learning outcomes are defined in terms of the knowledge, skills, and abilities that students have attained as a result of their involvement in a particular set of educational experiences.

## Why the Learning Outcome Approach to Education?

The learning outcomes approach reflects a conceptual shift towards

making learning more meaningful and effective. For a variety of reasons, many students approach education as “alienated intellectual labor,” rather than something that is good for them, or as learning that enhances their lives.

Making education more meaningful for these students requires that they acquire a sense of the educational project as enabling them to lead a richer and more empowered life rather than a task done primarily to satisfy the demands of others. By explicitly building educational experiences based on what students should be able to do with their knowledge, the learning outcomes approach helps the educational community understand the point of the activity.

## Some of the benefits of using student learning outcomes include:

1. Increased student awareness of and involvement in their own learning
2. A common language and framework for discussions about learning within departments
3. A context for course design and revision
4. An approach to curriculum assessment and change
5. An important first step toward clear communication of expectations to students
6. Meeting a requirement of accrediting agencies.

*Every program at NKU needs to define Student Learning Outcomes to ensure reaffirmation.*



# Types of Student Learning Outcomes:

### 1. Institutional

- Result of obtaining a degree or certificate from the institution

Each degree and certificate from an institution need not fulfill every institutional student learning outcome.

### 2. Program-level

- Result of finishing a program
- Result of completing a student services program activity

However, each degree and certificate must meet at least one of them.

### 3. Course-level

- Result of completing a course

Likewise, each course within a program need not fulfill every program-level student learning outcome.

However, each course must meet at least one of its

program’s established student learning outcomes.

By contrast, a course should meet every one of its stated student learning outcomes.

**For more information on student learning outcomes and examples of each type, contact the Office of Curriculum, Accreditation, and Assessment at 6578.**

**Learn how to incorporate SLO in your curriculum!**

**The University Curriculum Committee presents:  
A Workshop with Dr. Larry Kelley on May 11, 2006**

**Dr. Kelley has been involved with educational assessment for more than 20 years and will be offering his expert advice on how to build SLO around your curriculum!**

**More details to come!**

*The Office of Curriculum, Accreditation and Assessment provides assistance to colleges, departments, faculty, and other units of the University in the identification of appropriate information pertinent to measuring programmatic outcomes.*

*The office is responsible for the University's curricular and assessment activities. The office also serves as NKU's Liaison to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) and will take a leadership role in the University's 2009 reaffirmation process.*

*During the last two decades, the effectiveness of the world of higher education institutions has been challenged by agents such as federal and state governments, educational foundations, the general public, students and their families, and faculty and administrators within the institution.*



## **SACS REAFFIRMATION SCHEDULED FOR 2009!**

Each issue of the newsletter will feature information about the SACS reaffirmation process and requirements. This month we highlight the Quality Enhancement Plan.

### **Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP)**

SACS defines a QEP as a "...course of action for institutional improvement that addresses one or more issues that contribute to institutional quality, with special attention to student learning. The QEP is a major component of the reaffirmation process and should be designed to demonstrate a capacity to address significant issues and aspirations."

In preparing the QEP, an institution is expected to engage the wider academic community in a comprehensive and thorough analysis of the effectiveness of the learning environment to support student learning and to accomplish the mission of the institution. The student learning concept should permeate the goals of the QEP, however, its inclusion can be broadly interpreted.

Conceptually, an outline of a QEP might include but not be limited to the following components:

- A topic, identified by the institution, that is creative and vital to the long-term improvement of student learning
- Evidence that developing the QEP has engaged all appropriate campus constituencies
- Specific, well-defined goals related to the issue of substance and depth, expected to lead to measurable results
- Issues related to the identified topic that are critical or essential to the institution
- Evidence of careful analysis of the institutional context in which the goals will be implemented, including analysis of both internal and external strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges.

**For more information about SACS and the SACS Reaffirmation Process  
go to: <http://access.nku.edu/sacs/>**

**WE HOPE THAT THIS NEWSLETTER WILL HELP TO KEEP YOU AWARE OF  
UPCOMING GOALS AND RESPONSIBILITIES ASSOCIATED WITH  
SACS REAFFIRMATION.**

**PLEASE CONTACT THE OFFICE WITH COMMENTS OR CONTENT SUGGESTIONS  
TO INCLUDE IN THIS QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER!**

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