



ASSESSMENT UPDATE January 2006

The 2004-2005 Assessment cycle for Cedarville University has been successfully finished! My thanks to everyone whose hard work made this significant achievement possible!

THE 2004-5 REPORT

The report was published in four volumes to allow easier access to the material:

- ✚ 2004-5 Assessment Report Part 1: Highlights
- ✚ 2004-5 Assessment Report Part 2: Complete Unit Assessment Reports
- ✚ 2004-5 Assessment Report Part 3: Selected Survey Data
- ✚ 2004-5 Assessment Report Part 4: Assessment History

Volume 1 would be of most interest to most people. It contains a quick overview of the results of the assessment and then provides one-page highlights of the more complete reports submitted by over 50 assessment reporting units. Copies of all four volumes are available at <http://www.cedarville.edu/accreditation/assessment/resources.htm>.

WHAT DID WE LEARN ABOUT ASSESSMENT AT CEDARVILLE UNIVERSITY?

- ✓ **We learned that assessment is the “normal way of doing business” for many of our offices on campus.** Rather than some artificially imposed requirement, many offices on campus have for years sought to measure their impact on students and to respond to those measurements. Across all six divisions we learned that meaningful assessment processes were already deeply embedded in the day-to-day culture of on our campus.
- ✓ **We learned that informed decisions lead to effective actions.** In the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness we use the acronym “ID/EA” to express the desired link assessment forges between information and initiative. The “highlights” reports in Volume 1, and the more complete reports in Volume 2, demonstrate clearly our desire and capacity to “close the assessment loop” by documenting the actions taken in response to the measurements of effectiveness when compared to the desired benchmarks. The total sum of assessment-driven actions across campus is truly impressive and reflects a deep commitment to continuous improvement.
- ✓ **We learned that assessment is a demanding investment, but its rewards are great.** The assessment process at Cedarville University has demanded much time, energy, and teamwork. When placed alongside the demands of day-to-day operation, as well as involvement in both the current University Self Study and the newly revised Strategic Planning Process, there can be no doubt that assessment is demanding. However, its rewards are also great: a real commitment to making a difference in the lives and learning of students based on measured performance and clearly established standards for that performance. Excellence is never accidental – our assessment process has underwritten the desire for excellence in service by intentionalizing that desire in terms of
 - ✚ clarity of mission and objectives
 - ✚ specificity of assessment tools, processes and benchmarks
 - ✚ objectivity of actual performance measurement
 - ✚ responsiveness of actions taken in light of actual versus desired outcomes
- ✓ **We learned that assessment enhances teamwork.** While the administrative process of assessment seems to be heavily “document” oriented, the real value of assessment is in the increased unity of service by the various assessment unit teams. Teams drew together to “hammer out” meaningful statements of their unique missions. They debated the wording and priority of potential objectives. They searched together to determine tools/processes for assessment as well as appropriate benchmarks to judge success. In doing these tasks together the team members drew closer through a deeper understanding of the impact they could have on student lives and learning. Many teams devoted time to prayer – and in those times sensed even more clearly the special calling God had placed on their hearts as a community committed to doing all things as unto the Lord.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

The simple answer is that all assessment units are asked to reexamine their mission, objectives, assessment tools/processes and benchmarks to determine if they want to make any changes for the 2005-6 school year. Some assessment units indicated as part of the actions taken in response to their 2004-5 assessment that they did intend to change some of the elements.

However, we will be introducing a few changes in the assessment process during the 2005-6 school year:

1. **All assessment units are asked to complete a grid that maps the unit's objectives against the objectives of the university.** That map is a simple grid that will look something like the following:

UNIVERSITY OBJECTIVES	Statement of Assessment Unit's Objective #1	Statement of Assessment Unit's Objective #2	Statement of Assessment Unit's Objective #3	Statement of Assessment Unit's Objective #4	Statement of Assessment Unit's Objective #5
To undergird the student in the fundamentals of the Christian faith and to stimulate each student to evaluate knowledge in the light of scriptural truth	✓			✓	
To encourage growth in Christian character in each student and to help the student accept responsibility in faithful Christian service			✓		
To increase each student's awareness of the world of ideas and events that are influencing our contemporary culture and to prepare each student to participate knowledgeably in our society		✓			✓
To enable each student to develop sound critical and analytical reasoning		✓		✓	
To provide sufficient opportunities for each student to practice the skills of communication	✓		✓		
To offer opportunities for academic specialization and preparation for graduate study and to assist each student in selecting and preparing for a vocation					
To foster each student's appreciation of and participation in wholesome avocational and cultural activities	✓			✓	

2. **Each assessment unit will produce its own “highlights page.”** In the 2004-5 assessment I decided to add the highlights page late in the semester. Many units had already submitted their reports. So I constructed the highlights pages, selecting what I saw as a relevant sample of the assessment work done by each unit. In the 2005-6 assessment cycle we will ask each unit to construct its highlights page by selecting the elements from its larger report that it best feels reflects the most important accomplishments of the unit.
3. **All assessment units will be encouraged to incorporate assessment findings into their strategic planning and budgeting activities.** The strategic planning process calls for every division to develop a strategy that reflects five elements:
 - Assumptions
 - Goals
 - Initiatives
 - Logistics (implementation and budgeting implications)
 - Evaluation

Each of these elements should have clear links to the assessment process elements as illustrated in the following table:

Assessment Elements / Strategy Elements	Mission	Objectives	Assessment tools and processes	Benchmarks	Measured results	Actions in light of benchmarks vs results
Assumptions	X	X				
Goals		X		X	X	X
Initiatives			X		X	X
Logistics			X			
Evaluation				X	X	

WHAT ADDITIONAL SURVEYS WILL WE BE CONDUCTING THIS SPRING SEMESTER?

This spring we will be involved in a variety of surveys related to specific offices on campus (remember that these are only the surveys in which the OIRE are involved – a number of offices conduct their own internal surveys and these can be seen in their reports in Volume 2 of the 2004-5 Assessment Report). These will include:

1. **A study of student satisfaction developed and sponsored by the Career Services Center.** Under the leadership of Lew Gibbs, Career Services has regularly conducted surveys of student satisfaction. Mr. Gibbs and his team have developed an on-line survey to be done in cooperation with a number of other schools. Mark Mazelin and his team at Computer Services have been very helpful in enabling the “behind the scenes” work to bring this cooperative venture to fruition. This cooperative effort will provide all participating schools with campus-specific and comparative data for assessment.
2. **A study of student satisfaction and attitudes toward the University medical Services.** Under the leadership of Deb McDonald, an on-line survey related to services and experiences of the UMS will be offered to students across campus. This survey will provide a great deal of specific feedback related to both past experiences with the UMS and also expectations related to expectations for possible future services.
3. **A study of student spiritual development.** This campus-wide survey is being undertaken in cooperation with the schools in the Coalition of Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU). This on-line survey hopes to identify the “state” of spiritual growth and development on campus and the factors that underlie the process. In addition to the cumulative group data we will receive, individual students will receive feedback about their own spiritual development through this survey.

SO, WHAT DOES YOUR ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT DO?

Actually, this is my clever way of introducing Mrs. Cindy Weir to those of you who have not met her. She joined the office last August, as my Administrative Assistant has been a tremendous asset! She is responsible for a number of crucial tasks:

- She coordinates the information gathering and reporting for some 20 different reports we provide to “external” agencies ranging from U.S. News and World Reports to a quasi-government report called the IPEDS (The Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System).
- She coordinates the surveys conducted by the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness including the Alumni Survey, the Student Satisfaction Inventory and the Freshmen CIRP (Cooperative Institutional Research Program) survey.
- She is responsible for working with the Office of Marketing Services (and many other information-supplying offices on campus) to develop the annual University Factbook.
- She helps in the administration of the University Assessment System and the University Strategic Planning System. In this regard she is my chief proofreader (and sometimes my chief critic!).
- She ensures the smooth running of the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness itself including supply, budgeting and scheduling matters.

Cindy is extraordinarily fast and competent. While I enjoy the pleasure of being the upfront person for the OIRE, it is Cindy’s excellence that provides the foundation for the service we provide. You can catch Cindy (and I) early most mornings at the Fitness Center (she is the one who is running – I am the one trying to walk really fast). If that is too early for you, she can be reached by phone at 3290 or by email at cweir@cedarville.edu. Give her a call, or drop her a note, and let her know you appreciate her work.

WHAT IF I HAVE A QUESTION ABOUT ASSESSMENT?

As Director of the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness and Director of Planning I have enjoyed meeting many of you – but there are many more I have not yet met personally. You can catch me at Chuck’s most days – just pull up a seat and join me! If you would like something more “formal,” call me at 7922 or send me an email at johns@cedarville.edu.

Dr. Sharon G. Johnson

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Director of Planning