CU-Colorado Springs

Student Assessment Report, 2001-2002

Prepared by the Office of Institutional Research and the Student Achievement
Assessment Committee

July 2002

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SAAC Membership, 2001-2002

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Introduction

The purpose of this report is to describe assessment activities at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs (CU-Colorado Springs) during academic year 2001-2002. It provides a summary of the actions that have been taken in response to the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCA) concerns and recommendations raised regarding the status of assessment of student learning at CU-Colorado Springs. This report further describes the processes in place to undertake assessment and examines the strengths and weaknesses of the existing student assessment efforts. The strengths largely rest with a campus-wide commitment to improving academic quality. Weaknesses are openly recognized and are undergoing further examination and action.

NCA Focused Visit

<u>1997 Evaluation Team Concerns and Recommendations</u>

In their last visit held March 10-12, 1997, NCA evaluators raised concerns and made recommendations concerning the status of student assessment at CU-Colorado Springs. The evaluation team noted there was some assessment on-going for some undergraduate majors, but that:

- Assessment implementation varied considerably from department to department.
- Assessment at both the undergraduate and graduate levels were labeled as "spotty."

- CU-Colorado Springs was found to be behind most NCA institutions assessing student learning and the effectiveness of its academic programs.
- Assessment of general education was not occurring.

The administration was encouraged to improve performance in this area. The visitation team recommended a focused site visit in March 2002. The evaluators stated that they expect that the focused visiting team would find "a functioning assessment program that has produced demonstrable improvements in instructional programs."

Following a two-day visit to the campus on March 18-19, 2002, the visiting team shared the following observations. First, they were impressed with the support offered to faculty pedagogy through the Teaching and Learning Center. Second, they were particularly pleased with the implementation of the student writing portfolio to assess both the effectiveness of the composition program and to assess that aspect of our general education goals. In general, however, they continued to have concerns about our assessment of general education, and expect that to be a major emphasis of our preparation for our regular accreditation review process. Third, they believed that there was an insufficient connection between assessment activities and actual program change. They urged that we make these links stronger. Finally, they expressed concern that the campus will need to respond to the emerging statewide core curriculum. It is too early to say what the specific response should be, but they urged our careful attention to it. Despite these ongoing and new concerns, the team was pleased that the campus had made progress in the area, and intends to recommend that we work towards the regular accreditation review in five years.

General Responses

The following summarizes the institutional responses and actions made over the past five years to each concern regarding student assessment raised in 1997. Related activities completed during 2001-02 are a central part of the following discussion.

- **Assessment implementation varied considerably from department to department**

The variance in levels of implementing well thought out assessment plans has been reduced to a large degree in the past five years. As of this year, faculty in all degree programs and stand-alone minors are collecting valid assessment information

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that are tied to specific educational goals and are using that information for curricular change and program improvement.

There still exists some variance in the levels of implementation and the maturity of assessment efforts. During its 2001-02 review, the Student Achievement Assessment Committee (SAAC) found that 31 programs (67%) fully met or exceeded institutional expectations for assessment. The review found another 12 programs (26%) were in the process of implementing their assessment plans and are on course to fully meeting expectations within a year. Three other programs (7%) had completed assessment plans that were recently approved for new or reorganized degree offerings.

The number of programs with exemplary assessment efforts has also increased during the past five years. Five of six colleges possess programs that are conducting outstanding assessment efforts that are actively engaged in aiding more programs to fully realize the potential for increasing student learning.

The level of variance has been further reduced in the past year through applying a consistent framework for conducting proper assessment of student learning across programs. SAAC has devoted considerable attention to the adoption of institutional standards for assessment practices. Input from students, faculty, and student affairs staff has been present throughout the formulation of these standards, and the level of input has led to wide acceptance of these expectations among the campus community. The Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs (VCAA) has reinforced these expectations by including a review of outcomes assessment as part of the regular program review process and has rewarded programs and faculty who are carrying out exceptional assessment activities. Greater consistency in assessment practices coupled with SAAC's annual review of progress has led to greater fulfillment of the institution's mission and in measuring it's own effectiveness.

Reaching a high level of participation in assessing student learning is furthered by direct assistance to programs rendered by the VCAA. In the past year, an assessment specialist position has been established that has consulted with and provided assistance to 19 programs. This office is supporting the administration of student assessment surveys tailored to specific program assessment needs. The VCAA has paid for the administration of nationally-normed testing in seven departments interested in using standardized exams. With the host departments, the VCAA is expanding assessment capabilities in writing and mathematics.

- **Assessment at both the undergraduate and graduate levels were labeled as "spotty"**

Both undergraduate and graduate programs are now actively involved in assessment of student achievement and pursuing continuous program improvement. The setting of educational goals and measurement of the effectiveness of stated goals has been achieved across undergraduate and graduate programs. Departments with programs at both levels are implementing separate assessment plans. The two departments with Ph.D. programs have established goals for student learning and measure achievement specifically at higher quality levels than that conducted at the master's degree level.

With several notable exceptions, a number of graduate programs are not as far along in achieving the same level of maturity in student assessment as is present with many of the undergraduate programs. However, at the current time all graduate programs are carrying out assessment plans designed to gain increases in student learning.

- **CU-Colorado Springs was found to be behind most NCA institutions assessing student learning and the effectiveness of its academic programs**

A steadfast institutional commitment is in place to assess student learning and to improve the effectiveness of academic programs. The institution measures its own effectiveness through the advancements made in raising academic quality.

- **Assessment of general education was not occurring**.

At the time of the 1997 NCA visitation, CU-Colorado Springs lacked a campus-wide general education program. Required courses outside the major varied from college to college, and sometimes from department to department. Even at the college or department level, goals and expected outcomes were not always clearly articulated. Such differences in general education requirements and lack of expected outcomes stymied formulating and carrying out a widely accepted assessment plan.

Core goals for general education have since been approved. 2001-2002 marked the first year the new general education requirements were implemented. A general education assessment plan is in place and baseline data has been collected. The baseline data has already produced information that will be closely reviewed for findings leading to a more successful implementation of the general education program.

The reader is referred to a more in-depth review of the current status and future direction of general education assessment at CU-Colorado Springs, *"2001 Baseline Analysis of Core Goals for General Education."*

Assessment at CU-Colorado Springs

Conceptual Framework for Assessment

The student achievement assessment process enables the campus to measure the contribution the CU-Colorado Springs experience has on student learning. The assessment process is built on a three domain conceptual framework: (1) cognitive learning or knowledge acquisition, (2) behavioral learning or skill acquisition, and (3) affective learning or attitudinal development. Most important to the faculty is how assessment is linked to curriculum, student learning, and teaching. Faculty are encouraged to use assessment results to provide a means to alter and improve these three aspects of the educational process.

Student Achievement Assessment Committee

In spring 2002 SAAC drafted a mission statement and a description of its charge for the purpose of establishing, in a clear and more formal manner, its role in the campus community. SAAC's mission is:

> *The Student Achievement Assessment Committee, composed of*
> *faculty, staff and student members, oversees the implementation*
> *and advancement of assessment of student achievement and*
> *student learning at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs.*

The charge of the Student Achievement Assessment Committee is to:
➢ Increase awareness and understanding of the benefits and practice of effective assessment of student achievement within undergraduate and graduate academic programs, distance-learning programs, and within the general education program.
➢ Ensure that students, faculty, and staff view assessment as part of the institution's culture and as a resource and tool to be used in improving instruction and student learning.
➢ Assist the university in improving institutional effectiveness and in fulfilling its mission and vision statements, particularly those portions directly focused on assessment and improving student learning.

➢ Promote students' knowledge about the institution's assessment program through explicit public statements regarding the institution's expectations for student learning (accountability) and the student's role and responsibility in that effort.

➢ Assist faculty in the assessment of student learning, specifically, the seven principles that promote student learning (i.e. collaborative learning, teacher-student interaction).

➢ Provide assistance to units in regards to planning, implementing, and utilizing effective assessment plans, as well as monitor the success of these plans.

➢ Work with Institutional Research (IR) to oversee assessment of the core goals for general education. Based upon assessment findings, make recommendations to the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and colleges for improvements and the use of results.

➢ Oversee the administration of student assessment questionnaires for first-year students, graduating seniors, and baccalaureate and graduate alumni, as well as the Academic Profile and the National Survey of Student Engagement. Disseminate the results throughout the campus community.

➢ Distribute funds in the form of mini-grants to faculty for use in assessment research projects in the areas of student achievement and student learning. Implement a "Request for Proposals" submission and selection process, assessing proposals based on certain evaluative criteria.

➢ Actively promote campus-wide integrated assessment (i.e. studies done at the course, unit, department, and institution-level), aligned together for a single purpose: to achieve continuous program improvement as well as dramatic increases in student learning.

➢ Help integrate assessment strategies and efforts among various departments on campus so that such assessment activities help guide institutional decisions and operational processes (i.e. planning, budget, improvements in instruction, staffing, curriculum, and student and academic services).

➢ Regularly communicate information about assessment activities and their results to the campus community.

➢ Continually advise the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs in matters affecting assessment and in policies and practices that will promote effective student assessment throughout the institution. Also, make recommendations to the Vice Chancellor regarding advisement, student success, and other relevant areas, to further improve student achievement and learning.

SAAC's vision for assessment reflects the campus role and mission. The revised campus mission states: *"The University of Colorado at Colorado Springs shall be a comprehensive baccalaureate university with selective admission standards. The University of Colorado at Colorado Springs shall offer liberal arts and sciences, business, engineering, health sciences and teacher preparation undergraduate degree programs and a selected number of masters' and doctoral degree programs."* The campus vision states: *"All students graduating from CU-Colorado Springs will demonstrate proficiency in knowledge, intellectual capacity, skills and personal growth."* The campus *Vision 2010* plan states as one of the eight goals that the institution will *"Provide a comprehensive, personalized, educational experience that prepares students to excel personally, professionally and as citizens."* In order to assess the accomplishment of the mission, vision and goals of the campus, the Assessment Plan examines student learning across the curriculum (breadth), and in the majors (depth).

In the first few years after the formation of SAAC, an evaluative process was used in order to understand how assessment was already taking place at CU-Colorado Springs. The goals of the campus for general education, the graduate curriculum, and each academic unit were carefully examined. Each goal was reviewed in terms of objectives, assessment processes, techniques used to measure the goals, description of the results generated by the assessment process, how assessment results were interpreted and used, and the strengths and weaknesses of the assessment of the goal. To apply consistent standards, evaluative criteria forms were created. Members of SAAC evaluated the goals using these forms. The resultant data were aggregated and descriptions of the results were distributed across the campus and to concerned constituencies. Subsequently, evaluative criteria forms have been developed and are used to provide feedback to units as they submit progress reports. These forms constantly undergo revisions and improvements. Please refer to Appendix A for the progress report checklist used during 2001-2002.

The following process has been established by SAAC to foster the development and implementation of effective unit student achievement assessment plans.

1. At the beginning of each academic year, SAAC requests a progress report on assessment activities from each academic unit.
2. During the fall semester, each unit submits a report to SAAC detailing progress toward implementing a plan that includes the goals assessed, the measures

used, the results on those measures, and the changes made in response to those outcomes, as well as any revisions made in the plan.

3. Members of SAAC evaluate each progress report. Those deemed to have significant remediable problems are returned with comments for immediate revision. Comments on other reports are returned to units for consideration for progress reports in succeeding years.

4. Each year, SAAC reports to the VCAA on the progress the campus has made on achieving an effective program of student assessment.

5. The Vice Chancellor works with deans to ensure that units respond to SAAC recommendations regarding assessment in ways that result in effective educational improvement taking place.

Assessment Specialist

Based on a recommendation from SAAC, a full-time Professional Research Assistant (PRA) was hired in the summer of 2001 to serve as an assessment specialist. This person was hired based upon her assessment background and ability to assist departments with their assessment efforts. Some of her duties include assisting departments with test result analysis, advising departments on assessment methodologies and student survey implementation, securing comparative benchmark information, and coordinating SAAC surveys administered via the Office of Institutional Research. Although the PRA position reports to IR, her assignments are prioritized by SAAC.

A dedicated position to assessment purposes has served to increase the amount of effective assessment undertaken and has added value to the use of consistent and appropriate information at the department, college, and institutional levels. The Office of Institutional Research (IR) staff also includes two part-time student workers who assist with data collection and data entry duties. The salary for the PRA and the wages for the student workers are expenses paid by the VCAA office. The director of Institutional Research and a Senior Professional Research Assistant together devote another 0.50 FTE to analytical studies of student learning.

Assessment Progress Report Template

Prior to academic year 2001-02, yearly assessment progress reports lacked consistency in content and context. Units were aware of the major components they were required to include in the yearly report, such as a listing of their program goals,

measures used, results on those measures, and the program improvements that occurred as a result of those outcomes. However, SAAC found that there were great inconsistencies in the way academic units reported their assessment activities and efforts. Some units submitted extensive and thorough reports while others submitted only a few pages.

Based on the recommendation of SAAC, the Office of Institutional Research developed a new Assessment Progress Report Template. This template was designed to assist academic units in preparing their yearly progress reports. A copy of the template can be found in Appendix B. All academic units received a template that contained the four major components of the template: the unit's past assessment goals, a listing of assessment measures and techniques in place, a summary of previously submitted data and findings, and a review of past curricular changes and program improvements made based on assessment results. The main purpose of the template was to both simplify and improve the reporting of the progress each unit has been making in implementing their assessment program. Future annual progress reports would consist of chairs and assessment coordinators adding the current information to the existing template and sending it back to SAAC via email.

In order to fully maximize the utility of the new Assessment Progress Report Template, four separate one-hour training sessions were held in Fall 2001. Ninety-nine percent of all department chairs and assessment coordinators invited to attend participated in a session. The sessions were led by the assessment specialist position in the Institutional Research office. At the session, each academic unit received an electronic copy of the Assessment Progress Report Template that was prepared for their unit. The session included an overview of the template design, a discussion as to how best to fill it out (by walking through each section of the template), and a question and answer period. In addition, each participant received a folder with a variety of resources and handouts, including a detailed instruction sheet for filling out the new template (found in Appendix C). Academic units were also referred to the Office of Institutional Research student assessment link found at www.uccs.edu/%7Eirpage/IRPAGE/assessment.htm.

2001 Assessment Progress Reports

All academic units required to submit a progress report (N=46), completed an Assessment Progress Report Template in fall of 2001. Using the Progress Report Checklist as a guide, each template was evaluated by two SAAC members (one of

whom was a faculty member). Those deemed to have significant remediable problems were returned with comments for immediate revision. Comments on other reports were forwarded to units in spring 2002 for consideration for next year's progress report.

Once all reviews were completed, each progress report was identified as belonging to one of four assessment categories: Beginning, Follow-up, In-process, and Acceptable. *Beginning* refers to units that were in too early stages of development (as a unit) to have a fully implemented assessment plan in place. *Follow-up* reports were those that were returned with comments for immediate revision (all of these were ultimately assigned to one of the other categories based on the unit's response). *In-process* reports were those units that were in the middle of implementing their assessment plan, such as, in the process of implementing an assessment measure or waiting to collect or analyze data. Finally, *Acceptable* reports referred to units considered having an effective and functioning assessment plan in place. This categorization allowed us to gain a more complete understanding of where academic units were in the process of implementing their assessment plans. Please refer to Appendix D for a listing of units and their categorization.

Figure 1 provides an overview of where academic units at CU-Colorado Springs stand in terms of the level of implementation of their assessment plans and the assessment category they were assigned by SAAC.

Figure 1

Status of Program Assessment Implementation
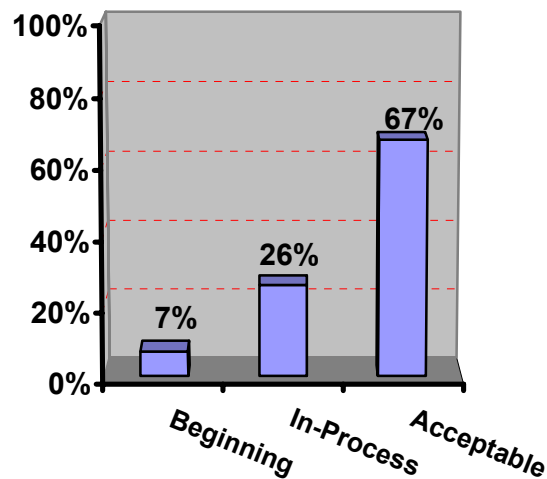
Thirty-one (67%) programs were found by SAAC to have fully acceptable assessment efforts. Another 12 (26%) were found to be in the process of implementing assessment plans. Another 3 programs (7%) were either new or being reorganized.

These programs had approved assessment plans but had not implemented these plans as of this date.

Student Achievement in the Undergraduate and Graduate Levels

The following sections of the report highlight the assessment of student achievement taking place at CU-Colorado Springs and the program improvements that have occurred at the undergraduate, graduate, and distance education programs. Appendix E provides a listing of undergraduate unit goals, the measures used, and the types of measures used to assess student achievement. Immediately following is Appendix F, which lists graduate program goals, the measures used, and the types of measures used to assess student achievement at the graduate level.

Program goals listed in Appendices E and F reflect faculty defining the mastery of the level of knowledge and skill acquisition appropriate for degree attainment within the discipline area. A review of these undergraduate and graduate goals reveals that most units perceive learning as occurring within the three conceptual domains adopted by the campus: cognitive (knowledge acquisition), behavioral (skill acquisition), and affective (attitudinal development) (Lopez, 1996). As the tables indicate, undergraduate and graduate units at CU-Colorado Springs measure student learning using a variety of direct and indirect measures and methods. This comes from an understanding that using a triangulation approach is more effective than relying on one type of measure. Indirect measures, when used to supplement direct measures, provide information that may enrich or illuminate aspects of what the direct measures tell us about students' academic achievement (Lopez, 1996).

However, there are several academic units that continue to want to use non-measures of student learning, such as grades and number of courses taken and completed, as ways of assessing student achievement. Some of these units have had limited exposure to measuring student learning and require further assistance from SAAC. SAAC will continue to work with these units and help establish a greater understanding of assessment among faculty as well as advise units on methodological issues relating to the assessment of student learning.

Continuous Program Improvement

CU-Colorado Springs is committed to meaningful program assessment that results in program improvement and responsiveness. In their widely read and discussed article, Barr and Tagg (1995) stated that U.S. higher education is in the midst of a

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historic shift from a teaching-centered to a learning-centered paradigm. One major outcome of this paradigm shift is the transformation of colleges and universities from "teaching factories" to "learning communities" (Angelo, 1999). CU-Colorado Springs has also undergone this shift in thinking.

The guiding principles of CU-Colorado Springs' assessment program clearly specify that assessment is to be motivated, informed, and evaluated in terms of its contribution to continuous program improvement. Though it is understood that the results of assessment will typically indicate that programs are functioning satisfactorily, it is also expected that changes in curriculum, instruction, and practices will result from assessment efforts. The process of assessment can itself improve the quality of teaching and learning by bringing faculty together to articulate shared standards and expectations (for example, when a unit agrees on rubrics for scoring a performance-based assessment procedure) or by improving communication between faculty and students (for example, when a department conducts exit interviews). The results of assessment can help to identify components of the curriculum that need to be strengthened or demonstrate that an effort to improve has succeeded.

Undergraduate and graduate units at CU-Colorado Springs are using assessment results to inform change and improvement. Appendix G highlights the program improvements (listed by college) that occurred during academic year 2000-01 as a result of assessment findings. In addition, academic units listed changes they are in the process of implementing or would like to see implemented in the near future.

The character of the program improvements listed in Appendix G demonstrates that units are collecting sound assessment information and using that information to increase effectiveness of the curriculum to advance student learning. Appendix G contains over 100 examples of program improvement undertaken in academic year 2000-01 by the academic units. The table reveals a high degree of curricular revision and experimentation occurring based upon expectations for student learning; for example, the MBA program was completely revised in the past year. A number of the improvements mention the redesign of course sequences and require ments to better facilitate student progress toward degree attainment in a timely manner. Creating more opportunities for active learning situations and using teaching technology are other common themes identified in the listing.

It is anticipated that more curricular change will be made in the future as the current process leading toward continuous program improvement have been in effect for a longer period. Establishment of educational goals with assessment measures

attached to each goal has focused the activities of the units toward achieving greater levels of student learning. However, this institution-wide focus on student achievement has only been in place for the past several years. There are more dramatic gains in student learning on the horizon.

Changes In General Education

Brief History of Core Curriculum Committee

In the spring of 1996, a special Faculty Assembly committee began meeting to establish a set of common goals for general education across colleges. Their efforts, though not leading directly to the adoption of a set of goals, provided the foundation for subsequent work on general education at CU-Colorado Springs.

By the spring of 1998, the Educational Policy and University Standards Committee (EPUS) of the Faculty Assembly collaborated with the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs to create an interdisciplinary Core Curriculum Committee for CU-Colorado Springs. The Core Curriculum Committee began meeting in the summer of 1998 to formulate a proposal to bring to the faculty for their consideration. Formation of the Core Curriculum Committee followed in response to concerns expressed in the North Central Association's 1997 visitation team's recommendations, as well as internal desires for the campus to implement a general education program. The Core Curriculum Committee's objectives were also grounded in the Total Learning Environment planning occurring at the same time.

The committee proceeded on the premise that formulating a set of clear goals and implementation strategies for our general education curriculum represented an opportunity to create a powerful mechanism for improving the educational experience of students. CU-Colorado Springs has a long-standing and demonstrable commitment to maintaining high standards in furthering the education of its students. It was on this commitment and the view of quality it represents, that the committee determined to build.

Core Goals for General Education

The first stage in formulating the proposal was to determine the appropriate goals for general education for the campus. The committee worked with previous proposals for goal statements coming out of an earlier Faculty Assembly Committee on General Education Assessment, and the statements about general education and a core curriculum generated as part of the Total Learning Environment Campus Plan.

The proposal was presented to the faculty assembly and was passed by the faculty of CU-Colorado Springs on May 4, 2000. It consists of the following preamble and core goals for general education:

PREAMBLE: The overarching purpose of general education is to cultivate students' intellectual, personal and ethical development and thus equip them to be life-long learners, able to adapt to an ever-changing environment.

CORE GOALS FOR GENERAL EDUCATION:

1. Students will be able to read, write, listen and speak in a manner that demonstrates critical, analytical and creative thought.

2. Students will achieve a depth of understanding in their majors and a breadth of experience in other fields.

3. Students will understand and apply the tools and methodologies used to obtain knowledge.

4. Students will be prepared to participate as responsible members of a pluralistic society- locally, nationally, and globally.

Core Curriculum

During the 2000-01 academic year, the colleges worked with the University Curriculum Advisory Committee and the Educational Policies and University Standards Committee of the Faculty Assembly to align the individual college general education requirements to the core goals. The college requirements were set forth in the *2001-2002 Course Bulletin* and represent the first round of implementation. Several colleges are engaged in a more extensive review of the requirements to more fully address the core goals. Each of the four colleges with undergraduate programs recognizes the need to use appropriate assessment to improve the effectiveness of general education requirements to achieve the core goals.

Selection of Instruments

The selection of instruments used to assess general education was based on their match to the four stated core goals, the general education curriculum content, and to other various institutional considerations. The selection of instruments was also guided by an understanding that assessment is most effective when it reflects an understanding of learning as multidimensional, integrated, and revealed in performance over time (AAHE, 1996). Our approach to general education assessment is guided by this principle. Further, our approach uses multiple measures that recognize the

difference in learning styles among students (Suskie, 2000; Anderson, 2001; Cheville 2001). The strength of combining student opinion surveys with testing is reportedly an appropriate way to assess general education (Muffo, 2001).

The Office of Institutional Research, as advised by SAAC, gathered baseline data from several instruments designed to assess the core goals of general education: the ETS *Academic Profile*, the Graduating Seniors Survey, and the Baccalaureate Alumni Survey. The selected instruments follow contemporary accepted practices in assessing general education programs and are closely tied to the goals of the general education program and the mission of CU-Colorado Springs. Faculty teaching general education courses have been and will continue to be centrally involved in the construction, implementation and analysis of assessment information.

The CU-Colorado Springs Writing Program implemented the writing competency portfolio as a general education assessment process during the fall 2001 semester. Please refer to Appendix H to review a flow-chart that outlines the assessment process for the CU-Colorado Springs writing program. Transfer students and native students alike must submit a writing portfolio within 30 hours of their completion of their writing requirements as defined by their undergraduate degree plans. Students select two essays that demonstrate their ability to independently manage writing problems beyond those assigned and assessed within their two, required, general education writing courses. Students submit two papers, which are analytical, argumentative or documented research papers they have written for general education courses at CU-Colorado Springs, or courses required within their undergraduate majors. The essays are assessed for these competencies: focus, organization, development of ideas, integration of sources, language control and conventions. The portfolio assesses writing competencies in the broader categories of rhetorical knowledge, critical thinking, writing processes, and knowledge of conventions. The portfolio enables the Writing Program to assess whole-text competencies beyond the sentence-level competencies currently assessed within ETS' *Academic Profile*.

The Future of General Education Assessment

Over the next year, assessment of student learning in the general education at CU-Colorado Springs will be shaped by the following efforts:

1. Establishment of baseline data concerning core goal #1 to profile general education writing competencies (real-world, whole-text criteria) of both native

and transfer students completing undergraduate programs at CU-Colorado Springs through the implementation of the Writing Competency Portfolio.

2. Expansion of baseline data concerning core goal #1 of general education writing competencies (language control, sentence-level criteria) of both native and transfer students completing undergraduate programs at CU-Colorado Springs through the implementation of the Writing Competency Portfolio.

3. Expansion of baseline data concerning core goal #1 indicating the number and types of writing assignments presently required within the general education program at CU-Colorado Springs through the General Education Writing Survey.

4. Expansion of baseline data concerning core goal #4, cultural and global awareness through added questions to the baccalaureate alumni questionnaire.

5. Expansion of baseline data concerning the four core goals through participation in the National Survey of Student Engagement.

6. Monitoring of student progress toward meeting each assessment objective as students complete the new general education requirements.

7. Establishing effective procedures for undertaking program improvement based upon assessment information.

Baseline information collected to date reveals a potential area for improvement in the current level of student awareness of civic, multicultural and global issues. In order to gain additional information to guide curricular change, a work group of faculty with scholarly backgrounds in multicultural and multinational understanding was called together to render advice on further data collection. During the summer of 2001, this work group revised a set of proposed questions to be added to the graduating senior and baccalaureate alumni survey.

As a result of the work group's input, graduating senior and baccalaureate alumni surveys were revised in fall 2001 to include questions further examining the degree to which their education at CU-Colorado Springs:

- Supported social interaction with others;
- Provided service learning opportunities in the region;
- Helped understand the interrelatedness of regional, national and global relations;
- Contributed to personal growth in recognizing rights, responsibilities and privileges as a citizen; and

- Reflected diversity in faculty providing class materials that recognized different cultures, religions, and races among people.

National Survey of Student Engagement

During the 2001-2002 academic year, CU-Colorado Springs participated in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) conducted by Indiana University. A sample of randomly selected first-year and senior students at CU-Colorado Springs were invited to participate. The survey called, *The College Student Report,* takes less than 15 minutes to complete and was available to students in paper or web version, a copy of the survey in included in Appendix I. *The Report* asked students about how and where they spend their time, the nature and quality of their interactions with faculty members and peers, and what they have gained from their classes and other aspects of their college experience. NSSE results will be incorporated into existing general education baseline data under each core goal.

During academic year 2002-2003 NSSE results will be reviewed and the utility of the instrument will be examined. If CU-Colorado Springs continues to participate in this national study, existing first-year and graduating senior surveys will be condensed in order to avoid redundancy in the questions asked. One of the major benefits of participating in such a study is the comparison information available from over 365 colleges and universities across the nation that also participate in *The College Student Report.*

Conclusion

The past five years have witnessed significant campus-wide efforts to address all aspects of NCA's recommendations. Specifically, this report describes assessment activities and efforts undertaken by the Student Achievement Assessment Committee (SAAC), academic and student affairs units, faculty in general, and executive management. Executive leadership has provided resources, moral support and guidance in improving assessment on the campus. SAAC has worked closely with academic unis to develop and implement effective assessment programs that focus on accountability and increasing student learning through continuous program improvement. Faculty in nearly all programs are collecting sound assessment information and are using findings to make curricular and programmatic changes tied to specific goals for student achievement. A plan to assess student learning through general education was developed and baseline data were collected to allow future assessment of the effectiveness of general education across the campus. In sum, the

campus has made very significant progress on each of the concerns raised by the reviewers five years ago, and based on initial feedback from the visiting team, they also agree with the statement.

However, some significant challenges remain. For example, consistency of program assessment has improved considerably, but there are still programs that have yet to produce fully functioning assessment. Understanding and support of assessment has improved, but are not yet a part of a pervasive campus culture. A functional program for assessing general education has been developed, but has not yet been adopted by the colleges, or approved by faculty assembly. Finally, resources are now adequate at the campus level, but have not yet been increased to the point that all of the identified needs at the unit level have been met. Accordingly, the following actions have been proposed to continue the development of assessment on the campus:

- Focus on units that re at the beginning stages and are in the process of developing adequate assessment programs to bring all programs up to a fully functional level within the next year.
- Shift the emphasis from the mechanics of assessment to the outcomes of program improvement, beginning with the renaming of SAAC (to become the Program Improvement Advisory Committee)
- Seek more opportunities to get assessment-related information out to faculty and staff
- Enlist the Teaching and Learning Center to support faculty understanding and the use of sound assessment practices
- Showcase programs with particularly strong assessment practices in future assessment workshops
- Continue to pursue adoption of a campus level plan to assess general education
- Seek to increase the availability of resources to reward programs that excel at assessment, and to assist programs that are struggling, or have special needs

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