

Running Head: Draft NCA Assessment Progress Report

DRAFT NCA Assessment Progress Report DRAFT

April 2005

Gerald Giraud, Ph. D.

Ursula Gaertner, Ph. D.

May 2005 Interim Report

Executive Summary

This interim report is submitted in response to the March 2003 Higher Learning Commission, North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (HLC/NCACS) evaluation team request for an interim report addressing assessment of academic achievement, general education, and instructional program evaluation. The report is in 3 parts addressing these areas respectively.

Assessment plan for student academic achievement.

Oglala Lakota College has made significant progress in assessment of academic achievement. Assessment of student learning has become an important issue in institutional discourse. Assessment has become systematized and assessment results inform quality improvement efforts at the institutional level and at the academic department level. Oglala Lakota College is making progress in determining measurable learning outcomes in general education and academic degree programs, and in implementing assessment of achievement relative to these outcomes.

Based on efforts made in response to the 2003 evaluation team visit and subsequent report, OLC believes that the assessment program has advanced from the Level One and low Level Two status observed by the evaluation team to Level Two status in every category of the HLC/NCA Assessment Culture Matrix, and to mid or high Level Two status in some categories .

While significant progress has been made, further work remains to be done. Efforts to elaborate assessment in the academic degree areas will continue, and the utilization of assessment results in quality improvement will be strengthened.

General Education.

A general education philosophy and associated learning outcomes have been adopted by the OLC community and placed into policy by the Board of Trustees. The College has implemented an assessment process to monitor the effectiveness of instruction and programs in terms of general education outcomes, and is gathering data as a basis for implementing consequential assessment for OLC students in general education achievement. The assessment of general education achievement is done through both standardized test (ACT CAAP) and locally developed assessments (holistically scored essays, Lakota language Oral Proficiency Interview). These assessment results are beginning to inform quality improvement efforts.

Instructional program review

Oglala Lakota College implemented a program review policy, developed guidelines and templates for focused program reviews, and established an ongoing process of program review. Components of this process are yearly reports by all academic departments (including assessment results) to the Vice President of Instruction (the Chief Academic Officer), and a focused review of selected programs each academic year. In 2004-2005 academic year, the first focused program review under the new process was completed.

Non-academic programs also began the process of program review. Activities included identification of program objectives and expected outcomes, and data collection related to these objectives.

2005 Progress Report

In March 2003, an evaluation team representing the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCACS) visited Oglala Lakota College (OLC) for comprehensive review of the College, for the purpose of continued accreditation at the Associate, Bachelor and Master level Programs. As a result of this review, OLC was granted 10 year accreditation status, with the stipulation that the college submit interim progress reports. This report is the first of those reports, and addresses assessment of student achievement, general education, and program review. The report is presented in 3 parts addressing these respective areas.

Part I ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

Organization of the report

Part I of the progress report on OLC's assessment of student academic achievement is divided into 2 sections. Section 1 addresses the three specific topics related to assessment of academic achievement identified on page 22 of the Assurance Section, *Report of a Comprehensive Evaluation*, March 2003. Section 2 addresses specific concerns expressed on pages 16 and 17 of the same document.

Section 1 – Assessment Plan for Student Academic Achievement

The 2003 HLC evaluation team requested that OLC provide the following:

- A. Provide evidence that the assessment program has become pervasive and that all components are actively engaged in the process.
- B. Demonstrate that meaningful data are being used to inform the process.
- C. Demonstrate that continuous quality improvement is occurring as a result of the process and assessment program.

Section headings related to these topics are:

- A. Commitment, pervasiveness and engagement
- B. Meaningful data are used to inform the Process
- C. Assessment results and quality improvement: How assessment results inform decisions.

A. Commitment, pervasiveness and engagement

OLC made a commitment to weaving assessment of student academic achievement into the fabric of the institution. Strong institutional commitment and support of assessment of student learning is evidenced by:

1. Board of Trustees (BOT) endorsement and engagement.

In working retreats, the BOT received and discussed reports of assessment activities in the college (see Appendix A). The Board adopted policies related to the assessment of general education and capstone assessment in degree granting programs (see Appendix B).

2. Administrative commitment

The President, Vice President of Instruction (Chief Academic Officer), and the Coordinator of Student Services actively support the importance of assessment of student academic achievement through public statements in faculty and staff meetings, written statements to the college community, and active participation and leadership in assessment development activities. Meeting agenda and representative group minutes reflect ongoing support for assessment (see Appendix C).

3. Academic program engagement and leadership

Assessment is a regular item on the academic chairs meeting agenda (see Appendix C). Chairs report progress on assessment in academic programs and discuss resources needed for assessment development and implementation. Assessment is also the focus of department meetings as they discuss ongoing efforts to integrate assessment in department educational efforts, and also discuss the implications of assessment results as developed and available (see Appendix D).

4. Faculty involvement and professional development activities

During the 2004-2005 academic year, full time faculty members participated in assessment related professional development (see Appendix E). Faculty participates in decision making processes in assessment at the program and institutional level, and in assessment workshops that produced assessments and assessment related products. An example of faculty involvement in the assessment process is the finalization of the general education learning outcomes, the selection/development of assessment tools related to these outcomes, and the review and revision of learning outcomes for degree areas.

5. Commitment of resources to assessment

Budgeted funds are assigned to assessment related activities and products. An assessment director was hired, and the office is funded through the budget of the Chief Academic Officer (see Appendix F). Funds for training and stipends for faculty attendance at assessment related conferences are made available and utilized.

6. Clearly defined responsibility for assessment

OLC has employed a full-time Director of Assessment since 1998. Dr. Ursula Gaertner filled the position at the time of the HLC/NCA comprehensive visit in March 2003. Due to health problems, Dr. Gaertner stepped down from the position in June 2003, and the College began the search for a new Assessment Director. Dr. Gerald Giraud (see Appendix G) was hired full-time for this position in July 2004. The Assessment Director is in the Instructional Affairs administrative area, and answers to the Chief Academic Officer (Vice President of Instruction). The Assessment Director works with the Assessment Committee, a permanent committee within the college governance structure (see Appendix H).

Assessment is a topic of interest at all levels of the institution, as evidenced by meeting agenda, minutes, locally organized workshops, data collection and reporting. The process of articulating learning objectives and identifying opportunities to assess these objectives is ongoing, and discourse around these issues occurs within and between instructional units. For example, the articulation of general education objectives originated in the Instructional Affairs Committee, whose membership includes faculty, students, and support services staff from across the college. Faculty in Lakota Studies, Humanities and Math and Science, the instructional units where the general education objectives are primarily addressed, identified courses in which students have the opportunity to learn skills and knowledge reflected in the general education objectives, and opportunities to assess these skills within courses were also identified. Further, the faculty collaborates with the Assessment Committee (another committee with membership from across the college) in reviewing standardized assessments for use in

evaluating general education outcomes. The general education objectives are also examined by program area whose focus is on specialized skills sets (e.g. Applied Science, Human Services), and faculty in these units identify where the skills and knowledge articulated in the general education objectives are used in specialized courses, and delineate opportunities to assess these skills within the disciplinary courses.

In addition to faculty involvement in the articulation of assessment, OLC's close relationship with the reservation community and its organizational structure require that the community and various district center administrators and counselors are informed and involved in the assessment process. To facilitate this, retreats focused on OLC assessment efforts were held, with center staff attending. At these retreats, the OLC assessment program was presented and discussed, with particular emphasis on the importance of educational outcomes (see Appendix A).

Similar processes, involving specific departmental, disciplinary and specialized degree programs, are conducted throughout the college. As a result of this pervasive effort, the college community became engaged in the assessment process.

B. Meaningful data to inform the Process

1. Assessment program description

At enrollment, first time students and transfers with less than the equivalent of thirty (30) semester credit hours, take a placement assessment (ACT COMPASS) to determine readiness for college level work in terms of general education achievement in reading and writing. A locally constructed assessment is used in mathematics. As a result of this assessment, students are placed into preparatory courses or matriculate into college level courses. If placed in preparatory courses, students are assessed again before

entering college level courses. This assessment informs academic decisions about entering students and also provides data for decision making in resource allocation and instructional needs at the department and institutional level.

After completing core curriculum courses, students are assessed on general education outcomes. This assessment occurs after approximately 60 hours of coursework that includes courses identified as core curriculum and related to general education outcomes. General education assessment at OLC has a history that includes assessment by standardized tests and local assessment, and has been uneven in its application and inconsequential for students. A report of recent general education achievement assessment efforts and results and an implementation plan are presented in Appendix I. In response to the NCA recommendations and to a review of past assessment efforts, the College has adopted a policy of general education assessment that requires assessment of major general education outcomes on an annual basis. (See Part 2: General Education).

The college community is discussing a proposal to require students to successfully demonstrate general education achievement before moving on to advanced academic programs. Student academic achievement in the degree area is assessed in a variety of ways dependent on the academic program and the learning outcomes specified for each degree area (see Appendix D).

2. Locally developed assessments: Development process and quality assurance.

OLC is committed to the use of defensible, valid and reliable assessment methods to measure student academic achievement. OLC is committed to adhering to assessment quality guidelines as elaborated in the 1999 *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing (APA, AERA, NCME)*. The College community continues the process of

examining a) the quality of student achievement assessment data generated by the instructional units of the College, and b) ways in which these data are used to inform decisions and operations in the Academic areas.

Locally developed assessments are defined here as assessments developed by faculty through an appropriate process. At OLC, the development process of local assessment follows these steps:

- a) Learning outcomes clearly defined in observable terms.
- b) Opportunity to learn considered and substantiated.
- c) Opportunity to assess expected outcomes identified.
- d) Appropriate assessment mechanisms selected.
- e) Assessment process and results examined for quality.

As the *Standards* (1999) clearly state, essential elements of assessment quality are validity and reliability. Discussion of assessment validity and reliability occur across the College in department meetings, College committees (e.g. Assessment committee, Instructional Affairs) and at the administrative level (department chair, V.P. and President meetings). As a result of these discussions, action is taken to improve the reliability and validity of the College assessment process, both at the department level and institutional level. These actions are described here.

Validity: Content validity is an important consideration in academic testing. To address validity of assessment results, faculty in academic departments first work to establish content validity by examining the objectives of instruction and learning driving the educational activities of the departments. The faculty deliberate, both collectively and individually, on the knowledge and skills expected of students at different levels.

Particular attention is given to the knowledge and skills expected of graduates at Certificate, Associate, Bachelor, and Master levels. Once learning outcomes are specified, faculty examine syllabi and course instructional material to determine learning opportunities relevant to the specified outcomes. The results of these efforts are clearly specified learning outcomes (see Appendix D), tied to course offerings.

Next, faculty examines assessment activities occurring in the courses linked to learning outcomes. Assessment opportunities within courses are identified for each of the learning outcomes. Comprehensive assessments of learning outcomes continue to be constructed from these assessment opportunities. Some departments are more advanced in their efforts than others. The result of this process are locally developed content valid assessments aimed at the knowledge and skills expected of students at levels of academic progression.

Academic departments also continue the development, use and evaluation of more global assessment efforts, including portfolios, capstone projects, and student demonstrations. These assessment efforts are aligned with the learning objectives identified through the process described above. For example, when portfolios are used as assessment of academic achievement, the contents of the portfolio need to align with learning objectives, and the rubrics for assessing portfolio content are also aligned with specific observable outcome expectations. Again, departments are at different levels of accomplishment in this process.

Reliability: Reliability of the assessments developed through the processes described above are examined through methods appropriate for type of assessment. For

example, for subjectively determined scores (e.g. rubric based scores of essays and student demonstrations), faculty scorers are trained to apply rubrics, and levels of inter-rater agreement are determined. An example of this is the holistic scoring of essays, which involves a training session intended to promote reliability in scoring across scorers.

For objectively scored assessments (e.g. multiple choice) reliability is determined through methods appropriate for criterion referenced interpretation. Where inadequate reliability is discovered, appropriate strategies for improving consistency are pursued. Reliability is continuously monitored as assessments are used in practice. The examination of reliability varies by department, and is dependent on the progress made toward establishing content validity.

3. Standardized Assessment: Placement and Achievement

Standardized assessments are assessments that are developed by testing companies and purchased by the College to serve certain purposes in the college assessment program. Standardized assessments used by the College are carefully selected through a review process involving faculty and administrators. Criteria for selection of standardized assessments include:

- a) The match of test specification to the intended use of the assessment result by the institution.
- b) Technical quality of assessment results and supporting evidence for such quality.
- c) The ease of use.
- d) Services of value to the institution provided by the test vendor.

The college utilizes standardized assessments for several purposes. All incoming freshmen take the COMPASS test of academic skills for the purpose of identifying level of reading and writing skill, and subsequent placement into the appropriate English course (e.g. developmental course, regular course). At the completion of developmental courses, students are retested to qualify for matriculation. The results of standardized assessments are compared to results of locally developed assessments to provide evidence of the validity of both assessments.

C. Assessment results and quality improvement: How assessment results inform decisions.

The purpose of assessment of student academic achievement is primarily to inform evaluation of instructional effectiveness, but data collected from assessment efforts informs both assessment and instructional processes at OLC. Assessment process is informed by data through the calculation of reliability and the development of evidence for the validity of assessments. As analysis and evidence suggest, assessments and assessment processes are modified. Instructional processes are informed by assessment results through regular examination of results by individual faculty, unit and department committees, department chairs and at the institutional level.

At the institutional level, the results of entrance assessment, post testing for students placed in developmental courses, and assessment of general education are analyzed by the Assessment Office. Reports are constructed, and presented to OLC's President, Vice President of Instructional Affairs, and academic department chairs. These reports are also made available on the OLC web site (www.olc.edu, follow *Other Departments* link to *Assessment and Research*).

As a result of institutional level assessment, a study of OLC's efforts at developmental instruction in reading, writing and mathematics was initiated. This study is ongoing, but completed analyses have prompted College wide discussion of the implementation of thresholds for student advancement at entrance to the College and at the degree program level. Academic program chairs have been charged with determining tentative plans for program admission standards (see Appendix C). The Education and Nursing departments have these plans in place, but are examining academic achievement requirements.

In addition to assessment aimed at institutional level academic achievement goals, OLC academic departments also assess academic achievement in relation to academic department specific learning outcome expectations. Below are descriptions of assessment efforts in academic departments.

Human Services: For the last several years, the Human Services department has used an authentic assessment procedure based on analysis of a film or segments of film by graduating students. Students are asked to describe what they saw, to use social science terminology, to apply social science theory, and to supply an alternative theoretical interpretation. Scoring is based on a four level rubric. These assessments have been conducted after classes end for the spring semester. Since the first use of this assessment procedure, graduating students have performed well in describing what they saw, and acceptably in use of terminology. Application of theory has been marginal, and alternative interpretation has been below the level department members considered acceptable. There has been no evidence of a trend in the results over four years, although BS students perform better than AAS students.

After the assessment in Spring 2003, the department invited students to participate in a focus group to examine reasons for low performance. Several issues emerged from this process. The most mentioned is that many students experienced “burn out” after finishing the semester and dealing with graduation requirements, and as a result found it difficult to focus on and exert effort in the assessment. A second issue is that the topics of the films are often not familiar to the students, and in some cases a main issue in the film is so compelling that its immediate impact overwhelmed careful analysis of the film. A third issue is that students are asked to write immediately after the film, with little time for reflection.

As a result of data collection and analysis, Human Services faculty took the following action:

1. Implemented prerequisite content assessment in sequential courses.
2. Examined syllabi and course content in introductory courses and made adjustments.
3. Revised the end of program assessment process to address student and faculty concerns.

Lakota Studies: Another example of assessment results informing content delivery occurred in the Lakota Studies department. A fundamental learning objective in Lakota Studies is facility in Lakota Language. The department adopted the Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) assessment model and adapted it to the Lakota language as one means to assess language ability. OPI training was conducted for the Lakota Studies adjunct faculty who teach the language and also for reservation Lakota language teachers during the 2003-2004 academic year. The department’s expectation is that the Lakota

Studies adjunct language faculty will utilize the OPI to assess their language students and to assist the department in assessing the language ability of all OLC students.

The OPI is a testing method that measures how well a person speaks a language by comparing that individual's performance of specific tasks, not with some other person's performance, but with the criteria for each of the nine proficiency levels. It assesses language proficiency in terms of the ability to use language effectively and appropriately in real-life situations.

The OPI was administered to Lakota language students in June 2004, with somewhat disappointing results. To address the assessment results, the department visited with the students who participated in the OPI to determine why performance was less than expected. As a result of these discussions, the department decided to extend language immersions for students to improve their speaking ability. Other alternative methods of teaching language and course delivery are also discussed among faculty members.

Education: Another example of assessment results informing instructional quality is in the Education department. The Education department reviews first year teacher assessments from school administrators yearly to inform program quality efforts. This assessment effort started 5 years ago, and the department observed over time that school administrators were scoring OLC practicing teachers low in the area of assessment. In other words first year teachers were scoring low in their ability to assess learning. As a result of this assessment outcome, Education department faculty reinforced assessment methods throughout the pedagogy curriculum. As a result, school principals' rating of OLC teacher graduates has improved in the area of assessment.

Education also utilizes student teacher evaluations as an assessment of student learning and to inform program quality. The results of these evaluations seem to follow a scaffold pattern. Eight evaluations are given within a 16 week session. This includes 4 evaluations at the lower elementary level and 4 at the upper elementary level. The evaluation is based again on the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) standards. Each evaluation leads to more communication about these 10 standards and ways the teacher candidates can improve his or her teaching during the seminar class. The student deficiencies are communicated to faculty members who in turn find means to include remedial activities in instructional plans.

Another important assessment related to quality of instruction and learning in the Education department is the entrance interview for teacher candidates. This qualitative assessment provides Education faculty with information about the prospective teacher. The interview is based around the INTASC standards for beginning teachers. Faculty have mapped the curriculum to see where these standards are introduced, practiced and then mastered. The department describes this effort:

We still are in the era of refinement with this since we began this academic year, although we feel we are able to get a better picture at the entrance interview where we can assist the teacher candidate with their future academic experiences at OLC.

Thus, the Education department faculty monitors student learning in those skill areas important to effective teaching, beginning with the entrance interview through the first year of teaching practice. Curriculum and instruction modifications are based on the results of these assessments to improve the quality of the program.

Math and Science: One program within the Math and Science department prepares students for transfer to mathematics intensive programs at the South Dakota School of Mines & Technology (SDSM&T). Student performance in a differential equations course is tracked. Of 15 students who took this course in recent semesters, only 4 passed. As a result of this tracking, the math faculty have added emphasis on basic skills related to differential equations to the calculus sequence and is considering offering a 1 credit pre-differential equations course for the next cohort. Monitoring of student performance in differential equations at SDSM&T will allow evaluation of these efforts at improving quality.

Nursing: The Nursing department has a strong record of assessment. Through the contracted services of Assessment Technology Institute (ATI), nursing students are evaluated on skill and knowledge sets related to the National Certification Licensing Examination – Registered Nurse (NCLEX-RN) licensing examination after every course. As a result of this ongoing assessment, weakness in students' mathematics skills has been observed. Efforts to address this weakness include tutoring, special classes, and emphasis on mathematics operations in nursing courses.

Humanities: While some departments, as described above, have acted upon assessment results with action aimed at resolving identified problems, others are involved in the process of collecting data, making sense of it, and improving assessment and data collection procedures. For example, the Humanities department, where core courses related to reading and writing are delivered, certain assessment processes have been ongoing for several years. The primary locally developed assessment tool related to writing is a holistically scored essay constructed by students in English 103. These essays

are scored in a scoring session preceded by a training session on applying the holistic rubric developed by the faculty. Scoring results from each semester in academic years 2002-2003, 2003-2004, and Fall 2004 revealed a flat data trend, such that results from semester to semester were consistent, and disappointing against departmental standards.

The Humanities faculty responded to these assessment results by planning additional data collection efforts. For example, in addition to the holistic scoring of essays as a means to determine the writing skills of students, the objective diagnostic writing assessment component of COMPASS was administered to students entering in the Spring of 2005. The department scheduled a faculty review of holistic scoring results and objective test results following the Spring 2005 scoring session. The outcome goal for the faculty review is to construct specific recommendations aimed at improving the writing level of students.

Summary

OLC has made significant progress toward weaving assessment of academic achievement into the fabric of the institution. Through retreats, discussion in committee meetings, faculty development, and departmental discourse, OLC's assessment efforts have improved in quality and substance. Assessment results are being used to improve the quality of instruction and curriculum, and the importance of assessment is increasingly recognized by faculty, students and the governing structure of the institution.

The College recognizes the need to continue and expand upon the work described above. Future goals related to assessment include improvement in assessment of degree program graduates, implementation of consequential general education testing, higher

level faculty development in the area of assessment, and the seamless systemization of assessment reporting and linkage to quality improvement efforts.

Section 2. Response to specific concerns expressed with regard to Criterion Three

The Higher Learning Commission evaluation team offered the following critique of OLC assessment efforts (Assurance Section, Report of a Comprehensive Evaluation Visit, March, 2003, pp. 16 & 17):

The structure of the assessment program is beginning to take shape; however, the supporting infrastructure has not been developed. There is not presently a coherent, widespread understanding of the differences among assessment, program review, and institutional strategic planning.

There is unevenness across academic departments in the development and implementation of assessment plans, data gathering strategies and direct measures of student learning outcomes. Assessment has not extended beyond the instructional departments. There is no evidence of formal acceptance of the reports submitted or criteria by which to evaluate them.

Implementation of the assessment plans has only taken place over the past year. Few educational programs have measurable learning outcomes for their program or for their course syllabi. With the exception of nursing, most programs are only beginning to gather data. As there is a minimal amount of data, there are very few examples of program improvement based on data to enhance student learning.

There is no designated line item to support the assessment program; however, resources from the President's funds have been made available to support assessment efforts.

Overall the assessment program is functioning at a low level 2 in institutional culture, faculty and students shared responsibility with a level 1 in administration and board shared responsibility, institutional resources, and efficacy.

The OLC community has taken these observations under advisement. The College conducted a self study of assessment practices, and took action to address the concerns of the HLC evaluation team. Below, each major concern of the team is addressed.

There is not presently a coherent, widespread understanding of the differences among assessment, program review, and institutional strategic planning.

Efforts focused on the purpose, usefulness and appropriate processes of assessment were undertaken. Under the leadership of the Vice President of Instruction and the guidance of the Director of Assessment, these efforts began with emphasis on clear and measurable learning outcomes, in syllabi and as well as at the program and institutional level. Retreats, participated in by faculty, students, administrative staff and trustees, focus on the meaning of assessment, and the use of assessment results to inform program review and institutional planning (see retreat materials in Appendix A). These efforts promote a better understanding of assessment processes, and the value of assessment results in decision making and evaluation of programs and strategic initiatives.

The OLC academic program review processes have been reviewed and revised (see report 3 below). The distinction between assessment of student academic achievement and program review has been made clear. Assessment of academic achievement is clearly identified as an element of program review, one that provides evidence for program effectiveness.

There is unevenness across academic departments in the development and implementation of assessment plans, data gathering strategies and direct measures of student learning outcomes.

OLC made progress in this area through several activities. A Director of Assessment was recruited and hired (August, 2004) to provide leadership and guidance in assessment practice (see Appendix G). The Director, building on what had already been accomplished under the leadership of Dr. Ursula Gaertner, works with program chairs to

facilitate the review, improvement and implementation of academic program assessment plans. Grades are eliminated from assessment plans as evidence of student learning, and direct measures of learning outcomes (academic achievement) are in place. These direct measures vary by program and learning outcome goals, but each department has in place direct measures of articulated learning outcomes for at least one degree offered by the department (see Appendix D). This is not to say that all academic programs have implemented comprehensive and complete assessment plans, but data collection and review of assessment results for at least some learning outcomes in every department has been accomplished. Academic programs can now provide evidence of student academic achievement relative to expected learning outcomes in their respective programs. Plans are in place to continue development of academic program assessment and data review processes.

Assessment has not extended beyond the instructional departments.

The focus of institutional assessment activity is on improving assessment of student academic achievement. Therefore, progress is limited in expanding assessment beyond academic programs. However, some efforts are being made to include student services staff in promoting the importance of assessment, and in the assessment decision making process. For example, two student services staff are now members of the Assessment Committee, the Coordinator of Student Services participates in assessment discussions at department chair meetings, and assessment of student learning has been the focus of working retreats attended by student services' staff, students and Trustees of the College. Further, instructional sites have completed data driven reports on operations for

academic year 2003-2004. These reports were presented to the President and the BOT.
(see Appendix J for description of college organization).

There is no evidence of formal acceptance of the reports submitted or criteria by which to evaluate them.

Annual assessment reports from academic programs and institutional academic achievement efforts were presented to the BOT and members of the College community at a BOT retreat in October of 2004. Future assessment retreats are planned for each academic year. Other reports are presented to the Vice President of Instruction and the President of the College and to department chairs in department meetings (see Appendix C). Formal acceptance of these reports is recorded in the Chairs' meeting minutes. A comprehensive assessment report, consisting of a summary of academic program reports and institutional assessment results (for placement and general education assessment), is submitted to the BOT by the President of the College. Formal acceptance of this report is recorded in BOT meeting minutes.

Criteria by which these reports are evaluated have been recently developed. Criteria include 1) clearly stated learning outcomes, 2) evidence that opportunity to learn has been established, 3) assessments match learning outcomes, 4) results have been recorded, archived and made available for review, and 5) results have been reviewed and used to evaluate curriculum and learning activities.

Few educational programs have measurable learning outcomes for their program or for their course syllabi.

The determination of clearly stated and measurable learning outcomes is a central focus of assessment efforts at OLC this year. On the assumption that useful assessment must be based on well articulated measurable outcomes, the College

community focused on the development of a Philosophy of General Education and related general education learning outcome goals, and the academic programs devoted staff time to the identification of expected learning outcomes for students in degree areas.

The College now has a Philosophy of General Education with learning outcomes, and each academic department has a clearly stated set of measurable learning outcomes for at least one degree offered by the program (see Appendix D). Inclusion of learning objectives in syllabi is also a priority for academic programs, and a new syllabus format has been instituted (see Appendix K). Syllabi for every course are reviewed, and those lacking learning objectives and attendant assessment activities are tagged for revision.

As there is a minimal amount of data, there are very few examples of program improvement based on data to enhance student learning.

The amount and quality of assessment data collected at OLC has increased since the 2003 HLC/NCA evaluation visit. The use of assessment data in decision making and discussion of learning opportunities in academic programs has increased at OLC. For example, assessment of entering students for the purpose of placement into appropriate math and English courses has generated substantial data, and reports analyzing the data have been generated. These reports spark discussion at academic chairs meetings, and among the President's staff about strategies and policies for dealing with unprepared students. Another example of assessment data driven discussion is general education achievement. Data are now available for several years, and comparisons have been made across years and groups. The analyses of available data have allowed the College to have a clearer understanding of the current state of learning outcomes and have led to new initiatives.

The use of assessment data to inform discussions and decisions at the program level is admittedly in beginning stages at OLC, however progress has been made in this regard as well. For example, Human Services and Mathematics faculty have used assessment results to consider curriculum and course content changes (see narrative in Section 1 for other examples.)

There is no designated line item to support the assessment program; however, resources from the President's funds have been made available to support assessment efforts.

Budget lines dedicated to assessment costs have been added to the Vice President of Instruction's budget. In addition, the VPI budget includes the salary of the Director of Assessment and Assistant Director of Assessment (see Appendix F).

The assessment program is functioning at a low Level Two in Institutional Culture. Faculty and Students Shared Responsibility with a Level One in Administration and Board Shared Responsibility, Institutional Resources, and Efficacy.

Our self evaluation of assessment activities suggests that we have advanced in terms of level of assessment program functioning. Below is our evaluation of the OLC assessment program as compared to markers described in the HLC/NCA document *Assessment of Student Academic Achievement: Assessment Culture Matrix*.

Institutional Culture: All academic and support programs, through commitment of chairs, committee membership, and faculty development are involved in the process of assessment of academic achievement. Student learning and assessment are the focus of work across the institution. Assessment of general education skills competencies and capacities has grown and become systemized. Mission, purposes and institutional priorities embrace the importance of student learning. We believe we have advanced to a strong Level Two in this area, and are working toward Level Three.

Institutional Support/resources: The institution budgets for staff whose primary responsibility is assessment and institutional research. The staff (Director of Assessment, Assistant Director of Assessment) are Ph. D. trained. OLC has recently specified a budget line in the Vice President of Instruction budget for assessment activities. In 2004-2005 academic year, faculty development grant funds were allocated for faculty attendance at conferences with a focus on assessment of academic achievement. Assessment information is reported in meetings, through emails, and through the Assessment and Research department web page. Assessment resources are available for faculty in the Assessment office. The Director of Assessment meets with departmental faculty regularly to discuss assessment issues and to provide consultation. We believe we have advanced to Level Two in this area.

Administrative and Board shared responsibility: The President of OLC has expressed support for assessment activities in all-staff meetings, academic chairs meetings, and in Board meetings. The Board of Trustees received assessment reports and participated in working retreats related to assessment and general education. The Vice President of Instruction included assessment as an agenda item for every academic department chairs meeting. Assessment is acknowledged and included in strategic planning processes (see Appendix L).

The Vice President of Instruction (VPI) has oversight of assessments through supervision of the Director of Assessment and the assessment office. The VPI receives yearly and interim academic department reports that include assessment results and improvement initiatives based on those results. Department chairs are developing

assessment initiatives and working on the elaboration and utilization of already in place assessments. We believe we have advanced to a mid to high Level Two in this area.

Efficacy: OLC is making progress in implementing assessment programs. Institutional level assessment (placement testing, pre-matriculation testing, and general education testing) are well developed and results are increasingly referenced in institutional planning and discourse in regard to student learning. Academic department assessment programs are in development, with various levels of sophistication and integrations. Some academic departments are making decisions and adjustments based on assessment results, and others are elaborating assessments based on clearly stated learning objectives. In addition, assessment efforts in support services and faculty evaluation have advanced this academic year. We believe that we are at a mid range Level Two in assessment efficacy.

PART II. GENERAL EDUCATION

The NCACS HLC evaluation team requested a progress report addressing Oglala Lakota College (OLC) general education philosophy and outcome expectations. NCACS HLC requested that OLC demonstrate the following:

- A. That a philosophy for general education has been adopted and accepted by the College community.
- B. That clear general education outcomes have been adopted by the College community.
- C. That the general education component is applied consistently in all academic programs offered by the College.
- D. That the results of evaluations of the general education component have informed qualitative changes.

This report is organized around these respective issues.

A. Philosophy of general education at Oglala Lakota College

Consideration of general education at OLC began with the establishment of a core curriculum. Historically, the college has always had a core of courses that all students are expected to complete. This core curriculum implied a set of expected educational outcomes for all students, but these implied outcomes were not clearly stated, nor based on a guiding philosophy.

The core curriculum was revised in the 2001-2002 academic year by the Instructional Affairs Committee of the College. This revised core curriculum was adopted by the College community, and publicized in the College course catalog beginning in academic year 2002-2003.

Although a core curriculum was endorsed by the College, a clear statement of general education philosophy and expected outcomes did not yet exist. The 2003 HLC/NCA evaluation team pointed out the importance of philosophy and outcomes, and in response the College began a process for developing and endorsing a general education philosophy and clearly articulated and measurable educational outcomes.

The College community began the process of adopting a general education philosophy by holding a retreat in October of 2003 focused on the development of a general education philosophy and outcomes (see Appendix A retreat materials). (Retreats are frequently used at OLC to allow for participation of College and reservation community members in important decisions, and are a manifestation of the egalitarian and participatory nature of Oglala Lakota culture). Participants in this retreat were Board of Trustees, administrative staff, academic chairs, directors of instructional sites, and students. From comments and discussion recorded at this retreat, a draft of a general education philosophy was developed and presented to the College community at an all staff meeting. The draft was finalized and reviewed through the College committee structure (Instructional Affairs, Piya Wiconi Okolakiciye). In Fall of 2004, a general education philosophy statement, along with clearly stated learning outcomes, was adopted by the College community and endorsed by the BOT on November 23, 2004.

General Education Philosophy Statement

Wolakolkiciyapi, learning the Lakota way of life in community, and the general education core of Oglala Lakota College provide opportunities for students to acquire and apply the skills and tools to demonstrate and gain knowledge. Students will become effective life-long learners and healthy contributing members of their diverse local and global communities.

Oglala Lakota College is committed to providing the opportunity for students to acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to appreciate and understand:

The historical and contemporary contexts of multi-cultural and cross-cultural diversity that shape human societies, politics, cultures and their interrelatedness.

The physical/natural world, as well as the scientific, mathematical and indigenous concepts, theories, principles and resources, that help explain the world.

The intellectual, cultural and artistic achievements of the Lakota and other cultures of the world.

The principles of wellness for living a healthy life: physically, emotionally and spiritually.

The impact of modern technology on our lives, societies and environments.

The development of a personal value system, based on Lakota perspectives and globally-accepted moral and ethical principles.

B. General Education Outcomes

To operationalize the expectations of the general education philosophy, a set of clearly stated and measurable educational outcomes was adopted by the College community, and will be published in the College catalog and website. These goals were developed out of the educational outcomes implied by the core curriculum that had been developed by faculty in 2001, and the general education philosophy statement developed through College wide participation in 2003-2004. These goals were reviewed and endorsed by the Instructional Affairs Committee of the College, Piya Wiconi Okolakiciya, administrative officers and the BOT in fall of 2004. The outcomes are comprised of seven (7) goals, with attendant objectives.

Goal 1. Students will have skills to acquire new knowledge (Reading, Listening, Research).

As a result of taking courses related to this goal, students will:

1. Identify facts, themes, suppositions and conclusions from the written and spoken expression of others.

2. Identify needed information to address questions of interest, and locate needed information in printed, electronic and oral traditional resources.

Goal 2. Students will communicate effectively in writing and speaking.

As a result of taking courses related to this goal, students will:

1. Write clearly using standard English conventions in spelling, grammar, punctuation and word usage.
2. Construct essays and research papers having effective organization and use of references relevant to an assigned or chosen topic.
3. Present ideas, opinions or persuasive statements clearly and effectively in spoken form.
4. Communicate basic ideas in written and spoken Lakota language.

Goal 3. Students will understand and apply mathematical principles and methods.

As a result of taking courses related to this goal, students will:

1. Use mathematical symbolism and mathematical structure to model and solve problems.
2. Communicate in mathematical terms.
3. Order and analyze quantitative information to make judgments of real world situations.

Goal 4. Students will utilize technology in learning, problem solving, and communication.

As a result of taking courses related to this goal, students will:

1. Produce documents using word processing software.
2. Communicate with others via computers.
3. Analyze numerical information using appropriate software.
4. Locate needed information using computer platforms.

Goal 5. Students will understand the structures, possibilities and interrelatedness of diverse societies.

As a result of taking courses meeting this goal, students will:

1. Identify and explain basic concepts, terminology and theories of selected social science disciplines.
2. Apply selected social science concepts and theories to contemporary issues.
3. Identify, explain and apply Lakota concepts of community to contemporary issues.

Goal 6: Students will understand the fundamental principles of the natural sciences and Lakota explanations of the natural world, and apply scientific methods of inquiry to investigate the natural world.

As a result of taking courses meeting this goal, students will:

1. Gather and critically evaluate data using the scientific method.
2. Identify and explain the basic concepts, terminology and theories of the selected natural sciences.
3. Apply selected natural science concepts and theories to contemporary issues.
4. Identify and explain Lakota perspectives of the natural world and apply this perspective to contemporary issues.

Goal 7. Students will understand and appreciate Lakota values and culture, and the diversity and complexity of human experience.

As a result of taking courses meeting this goal, students will:

1. Identify, explain and apply Lakota aesthetic, philosophical, ethical and/or spiritual views.
2. Identify and explain social or aesthetic values of different cultures.
3. Identify and explain the contributions of Lakota culture to other cultures.

C. General Education Component Applied Consistently Across the College

As the College developed a General Education Philosophy and clearly articulated outcomes, the expected outcomes shifted from completed courses to the attainment of measurable educational objectives. The College moved toward an expectation that all students demonstrate competency in general education outcomes before graduating at the Associate level, or before moving on to specialized courses in the Baccalaureate programs. This change in expectation did not result in the elimination of all required core courses, as foundational courses in English, Lakota studies, and mathematics remained requirements for all students. However, the shift in focus from core curriculum to core competencies does allow for a selection of courses related to outcomes, and for a consistent expectation of general education outcomes across the college.

D. That the results of evaluations of the general education component have informed qualitative changes.

To pursue evaluation and assurance of the new expectations for general education student learning outcomes, College constituencies considered assessment methods and approaches that would allow students to demonstrate competencies and at the same time facilitate the evaluation of courses and instructional methods related to general education outcomes. An administrative proposal to develop or adopt a general education assessment for all students, and to make passing the assessment a requirement for Associate degrees and for advancement to Baccalaureate programs was advanced and considered as a long range goal (See Appendix N).

A committee of faculty representing programs across the College and chaired by the Director of Assessment examined various assessment options, including standardized

assessment, locally developed assessments and combinations of these options. While standardized assessments are available for traditional academic content, locally developed assessments are necessary for Lakota language and cultural content. Among the issues considered was the continuation of assessment methods already in place. These include the scoring of essays produced by students in English 103/113, a locally developed mathematics test, and locally developed reading test.

The Assessment Committee of OLC, based on the recommendation of the Director of Assessment, endorsed a trial of the College Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP), a general education oriented test developed by ACT. The College has used this test in the past to assess general education achievement, but not in a systematic way. In Spring 2005, subtests of the CAAP including reading, writing and mathematics will be administered to students who are completing related core courses, and also to students seeking admission to Nursing and Education degree programs. Pilot data from this and future administrations of CAAP will inform the College of progress and accomplishment in key general education objectives.

It is important to note that general education outcomes have long been a focus of interest to the College community, and that there is a history of general education assessment. A deficiency in this focus has been the lack of clearly stated learning outcomes and consistency of assessment strategies. These deficiencies have and are being addressed by the endorsement of a general education philosophy and learning objectives, and efforts to standardize and regularize assessment of these learning objectives (see Appendix I - report of General Education assessment). For further discussion of general education assessment, see *Part I. Assessment of student academic achievement*.

In terms of quality improvement tied to assessment of general education outcomes, OLC is in the preliminary stages of establishing stable assessment strategies that yield data that can be studied over time. Initial reports, based on historical and more recent data have been constructed and distributed (see Appendix I). In combination with entrance placement testing, which is focused on the general education content of reading, writing and mathematics, these data will inform OLC of the quality of its efforts in general education instruction.

Summary

Oglala Lakota College has a history of acknowledging and valuing general education. Recent efforts have focused on articulating a general education philosophy statement and learning goals and objectives, and on assessing academic achievement in general education content. These efforts have resulted in consistent general education expectations across the institution, and in a data stream that will be the basis for quality improvement efforts in general education delivery.

PART III. PROGRAM REVIEWS

Following is Part III of the Progress Report requested by the Higher Learning Commission as a result of the evaluation conducted in March 2003 (Assurance Section, Report of A Comprehensive Evaluation Visit , 2003, p. 22). As outlined:

Instructional Program Review – the College must demonstrate that it has addressed the following:

- A. All academic programs have program review plans and that the plans are being implemented.
- B. The results of academic review inform continuous quality improvement.
- C. All non-academic programs have review plans and that the plans are being implemented.
- D. The results of the non academic review are informing continuous quality improvement.
- E. Elements such as effective data, environmental scans, and needs assessments are apparent in the review process.

The report is organized by sections addressing the 5 points A. through E. above.

A. All academic programs have program review plans and that the plans are being implemented

In the Fall of 2003, Oglala Lakota College developed a template to facilitate data collection in academic departments to facilitate program reviews (see Appendix O). The template was finalized and distributed in February 2004. The template asks departments for a variety of data regarding their program, majors, and graduates; it is intended to guide academic departments in the preparation of self-study review reports. Departmental

chairs are charged with organizing and overseeing the self-study process, and with submitting the self-study review report in a timely manner.

A procedure was also developed, based on existing program review policy (see Appendix P). This procedure models to some extent the peer review process utilized by accrediting agencies. A committee of reviewers from outside the program under review examines the program self-study report, and other evidence as appropriate. This committee, appointed by the President, includes administrative, support and instructional members. Based on the program self-study report and any other data deemed useful and relevant by the committee, the committee submits recommendations for improvement to the program, the President, and College committees as appropriate. Recommendations may include but are not limited to: No recommended changes in program structure and operation; adjustments to curriculum or course offerings; changes in faculty makeup; elimination of programs. Recommended changes that involve substantial change in curriculum, course offerings, or faculty must ultimately be endorsed by the Board of Trustees. In any event, the Board of Trustees receives a summary report of instructional program reviews.

In addition to the above described institutional level program reviews, all instructional programs prepare yearly reports on program activities, including assessment efforts, enrollment, teaching loads, and efforts to accomplish goals determined by the program (see Appendix Q for a sample). These reports are reviewed by the Vice President of Instruction, who initiates action as appropriate. Possible action based on yearly reports includes: no action, informal follow up with department chair and faculty,

follow up and recommended action to the President or appropriate institutional committees.

B. The results of academic review inform continuous quality improvement.

As indicated above, academic program review is intended to provide evidence of the quality and quantity of program activity. The yearly reports described above serve as an ongoing source of information to inform OLC administration of program activity and effectiveness, and these reports can, and do, prompt action directed at program improvement.

In addition to the regular yearly program reporting, OLC is committed to regular focused review of instructional programs modeled on accreditation peer review. In the Fall of 2004 OLC implemented a focused formal institutional level program review of the Human Services academic department. The review process was a difficult learning experience for the institution and the parties involved.

In November 2004, the Human Services department was asked to collect data for a self-study following the template provided by the administration for the purpose (See Appendix O). A deadline for submission of the self-study report was set as February 15, 2005. The self-study data collection process proceeded in two phases: phase 1 (see Appendix R) collected data on the history of the department, the number of majors and graduates, and prevalent employment patterns of graduates. Included in this phase 1 report was an external scan regarding employment trends in the social and human services fields on Pine Ridge reservation, in the state of South Dakota and nationally. Furthermore, comparison data were included for other human and social services programs in and out of state as were program standards set by social and human services

oversight agencies at the state and national level. Data gathered from graduates indicate a need to ensure that academic programs allow for certification and licensing and for providing a career ladder for graduates.

Phase 2 (see Appendix S) of the departmental self-study was presented in narrative form and addressed students' goals, program assessment, faculty qualifications, evaluation and recommendations. The narrative provided by the department was compared to the institutional program review template, a number of gaps were identified between the report and what was expected in the template (see Appendix T).

The two separate reports contained recommendations relating to curriculum, faculty credentials, and professional and community oversight. A particular challenge to be addressed is the lack of internship/practicum sites where students can be supervised by licensed practitioners in order to accumulate work experience prior to being eligible to sit licensing examinations.

The review committee reviewed these documents, and members of the review committee prepared individual reviews of the report and tentative recommendations. Members of the review committee also met with departmental stakeholders and observed course delivery. Information gained from these interactions and observations became part of the review committee deliberations.

In a meeting of the review committee, which took place on March 8, 2005, the following recommendations were agreed upon:

1. Recruit and hire licensed practitioners; Ph.D.s preferred.
2. With new faculty on board, review and finalize the Human Services curriculum and strengthen the advising process.

3. Develop an admissions process for students who want to major in Human Services.
4. Explore involving Humanities faculty in developing other degree options.
5. Develop review processes to ensure inclusion of the Lakota perspective in academic courses.
6. Assure that faculty is appropriately credentialed for course content.
7. Assure that addictions studies and treatment curriculum are strengthened toward certification and licensure.

These recommendations were forwarded to the President, who endorsed them.

The report and recommendations were forwarded to the BOT for final approval.

The program review described above was the first review under recently developed procedures. A rotating schedule of program reviews has been set that requires two (2) instructional program reviews under the policy guidelines each academic year. The College has in place an instructional program review schedule, and has also begun data collection for the review of non-academic programs.

C. All non-academic programs have review plans and that the plans are being implemented.

Program reviews in non-academic programs are only just beginning. A template for data collect has been developed that was used by personnel of all ten (10) instructional sites as guide. The results are collected in a volume of separate documents for all sites. As yet, however the implications of the data have not been evaluated and no recommendations have been made yet.

D. The results of the non-academic review are informing continuous quality

improvement.

As mentioned under c. above, data submitted by the ten instructional sites have not yet been evaluated and recommendations have not been made.

E. Elements such as effective data, environmental scans, and needs assessments are apparent in the review process.

The college is beginning to collect effective and continuous data. Because of the review process, certain gaps have been identified and improvements are being made continuously. Another beginning has been made in collecting data as a result of environmental scan and these data have had a direct effect on the recommendations made for the Human Services Department.

One area that has not been addressed concerns community needs assessments. These are the next steps in moving the review process forward.