



ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING

MESSIAH UNIVERSITY

NEWSLETTER

In This Issue

Welcome and Thanks

Assessment in Action: Using the Stories of Results to Advance Our Programs

Upcoming Tasks

Confirm spring assignment linkages

Run assessment reports to ensure scores are coming through as expected

Collect any assessment measures that are not Canvas assignments (e.g. portfolios, surveys, employment data)

Welcome and Thanks

Jennifer Myers

Work Study, Office of Assessment

Hello, Messiah community! We're officially wrapping up our spring 2021 semester. Our office chose to round out this year's newsletters by discussing how to put our assessment results into action. After spending all year teaching and assessing student learning, we have the choice of what to do with the learning evidence we collected. We can simply run the reports and analyze the numbers, or we can look beyond the graphs and charts to see what they tell us about our students' learning experiences and use the results to improve our programs.

In our feature article, you can find plenty of insights and resources from our office. We hope that this information helps you run reports and carry out end of year AEFIS tasks, but also that they give you some practical ways to use the results you find to enhance the student learning experience at Messiah.

If you would like to discuss how this impacts your department in particular, our office would be happy to set up a meeting to talk with you. We also encourage you to look through the resources that are linked at the end of the article.

I would like to especially thank Dr. Kate Oswald Wilkins, our Director of Assessment, for her contributions to this issue of our newsletter about the power of reflection, action, and collaboration. I hope that you find her insights helpful!

Finally, I would like to thank all of you for your continued assessment efforts throughout this year. Your faithfulness to improving the student learning experience (even in the midst of chaos) is valued so much by our campus community. Best of luck as the semester starts to wind down. Happy reading! —

We want your feedback!

Is there an area of assessment that you think you could help others in or a problem you need help with? We created this newsletter for you, so we'd love to include it in the next issue.

Please send your requests to wsassess@messiah.edu

Assessment in Action

Using the Stories of Results to Advance Our Programs

Jennifer Myers

Work Study, Office of Assessment

The end of the academic year is quickly approaching, but the work is not quite finished yet. This is the time of year when all of our assessment efforts culminate and we can collect data to see student achievement.

But, what is the true relevance of assessment? Why bother collecting these numbers? What do they mean and what do we do with them?

What Do Assessment Results Tell Us?

AEFIS allows faculty to run a variety of reports to track student learning. Different reports offer varying views of student performance. Reports can even be filtered by major, course, gender, ethnicity, and other factors. Each department should explore the reports to find out what data and analysis methods are most helpful in answering your most important questions about student learning.

Having all of this data at our fingertips is amazing. These scores, however, accomplish little on their own. It is only when we analyze and document the data as part of a bigger picture that it becomes relevant.

Director of Assessment Dr. Kate Oswald Wilkins says, "There's a lot of good assessment work happening, but if it's not documented, it's really hard to show that we're examining evidence and making improvements that are evidence-based."

Key Terms to Know:

Assessment Results: Data based on linked assignments that shares how many students met the target for a given objective.

Action Plan: Strategic plan created by an academic department and based on assessment results; describes specific changes that will be made in the coming year to enhance student learning.

Closing the Loop: Record entered after executing and monitoring an action plan for an academic year; details whether or not the plan effectively improved student learning.

Assessment as a Story

Perhaps one of the best ways to consider our assessment results and what to do with them is as a narrative.

Natasha Jankowski, director of the National Institute of Learning Outcomes Assessment, asserts, "results in and of themselves are not very useful. **Assessment results become useful when we can tell a story about assessment by sharing the meaning that we made out of the results.**"

By properly assessing and acting on our results, we can share positive stories of the student learning experience with our prospective students, donors, and other stakeholders. We can also improve programs based on where students are performing lower than expected. This helps to ensure each student's academic story has a good ending.

Identifying Action Plans

As May comes, we have the chance to not just process assessment results, but to act on them to enhance student learning. Creating action plans is a key activity that transforms scores and graphs into stories about students.

The first step to designing an effective action plan involves examining assessment results and answering a basic question: "How well did students learn what we wanted them to learn?"

After this, it is time to take a deeper look into the results. What are the strengths and weaknesses among students in a particular course or program? What do these indicate about course instruction, college preparation, or other factors?

Departments should also initiate discussion about possible reasons student performance fell below the target. This is a critically important part of the collaborative assessment process, especially when sections of

the same course are being taught by different faculty with different results.

Kate points out, "these can be challenging conversations... But ultimately, **it benefits students if we have these conversations, and it benefits faculty.**"

All of this can lead to changes in objectives, targets, measures, advising, or other factors. This change, however, should be embraced as a way of improving the student learning experience.

Closing the Loop

Closing the loop marks the end of a chapter in our assessment narrative. Closing the loop invites faculty to examine steps that were taken to implement an action plan and any evidence that indicates improvement that has been seen a year later.

Kate sums it up like this: "**You are reviewing our action plans from last year's assessment cycle... [documenting] what you did to accomplish that action plan, and any evidence that you have that the action plan was successful.**"

While closing the loop is one of the last parts of the assessment process, it is incredibly vital, as it helps us look at the past and create a record that gives direction for the future. We can reflect on where we have been, where we are, and where we are headed in the future with regard to student learning.

Finishing off our assessment narrative this spring marks another year of learning, experimenting, and improving. Hopefully next year, the story will get even better.

Sources and Resources

[*Assessing Student Learning: A Common Sense Guide* by Linda Suskie](#)

["Evidence-Based Storytelling in Assessment" by Natasha Jankowski](#)

[Messiah University Assessment Resources](#)

[May Development Week Department Discussion Guide](#)

[Managing Assessment in AEFIS Training Presentation](#)



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In This Issue

Welcome and Thanks

Define, Design, Align: Creating Student Assessments that Measure Up

Upcoming Tasks

Remember to check your assessment plan for spring assessment measures and link assignments.

Run reports on fall 2020 assessments to spot any errors/missing student scores

Your school dean will be in touch with you about spring rubric scoring, which is due April 1.

Welcome and Thanks

Jennifer Myers
Work Study, Office of Assessment

Hello, Messiah University community! It is now 2021, and we successfully overcame the challenges of the Fall 2020 semester. In August, this seemed like a near-impossible task for many of us, and our whole campus community felt the burdens of stress, sickness, and adaptation. Yet, we persevered and are prayerfully taking on all of the joys and challenges that Spring 2021 might throw our way.

In this issue of our newsletter, we're shining a light on designing and aligning assessment measures with objectives. Some objectives seem to have more straightforward options for measures than others, but it is crucial that we effectively assess *all* course and program objectives

Our feature article includes insights and tips from a variety of sources that you can easily apply to your own assessments. Our goal is to focus on the big-picture role that assessment plays on our campus,

as well as the practical tasks that each faculty member can carry out to advance that process.

As always, if you want more information or personalized assistance as you walk through the assessment process, feel free to reach out to our office. You can also find several assessment resources at the end of the feature article.

I would like to extend a special thank-you to Director of Curriculum and Assistant Director of Assessment Dr. Susan Donat and Assistant Professor of Computer Science Dr. Devi Suberi for sharing some of their tips and experiences related to forming and executing effectively aligned assessments. I hope that their insights are valuable to you!

From all of us in the Office of Assessment, thank you for continuing to challenge our students to grow in intellect, character, and Christian faith in the classroom, even when the classroom doesn't always have walls. Happy reading! —

We want your feedback!

Is there an area of assessment that you think you could help others in or a problem you need help with? We created this newsletter for you, so we'd love to include it in the next issue.

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Define, Design, Align

Crafting Student Assessments that Measure Up

Jennifer Myers

Work Study, Office of Assessment

Everyone on campus seems to be overwhelmed by piles of syllabi at the start of each semester. The portions of your syllabus that relate to assessment can seem insignificant amid all of the content, particularly if course objectives appear irrelevant or unmeasurable.

Nonetheless, course and program assessment plans are critical to managing and improving the student learning experience throughout the semester, and if course objectives and major assignments don't line up, we need to make some improvements.

Defining Objectives

The fact of the matter is that **defining clear course objectives and creating coordinating assessments is critical to guiding students to growth.**

Director of Curriculum and Assistant Director of Assessment Dr. Susan Donat says it this way: **"Students need support identifying the critical aspects of the course on which to focus their efforts."**

Defining goals for learners (and then connecting them to assignments that evaluate their progress) is the most effective way to keep students (and faculty) focused on the desired outcome.

Designing Measures

According to Dr. Donat, **effective selection and design of assessment measures "provides the opportunity for the students to showcase their hard work and get feedback on the critical aspects of their development."**

Assessment scholar Linda Suskie proposes that assignments should be meaningful and relevant, challenging and realistic, and varying depending on the goals of the unit and course. They should be used to measure students' progress so that everyone involved with the course can evaluate and improve the learning experience.

By focusing on meaningful measures over work that does not add value to the course, **Dr. Donat concludes that "The benefit for faculty is that the process helps them to work smarter, not harder."**

Aligning Assessments

Appropriate assignment choices also allow faculty to make better use of their time inside and outside of the classroom.

While aligning measures with objectives can sometimes feel like the most difficult part of the assessment process, it is the key to simplifying the process. This simplicity, Linda Suskie suggests, helps us to be flexible and maintain a sustainable assessment process as our programs change.

Natasha A. Jankowski, the Director of the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA), suggests that the entire success of a learning environment hinges on the principle of alignment. This is because **the intentional design of the assessment allows teachers and learners to easily see how processes and expected results link together.**

Effective alignment allows students to apply the knowledge that they are gaining in the classroom to a larger educational goal, as well as in a manner that will be helpful to them as they use their degree beyond Messiah.

Now What?

The question now is how do we go about putting all of these pieces together?

One of the most practical tips that Dr. Donat had to offer was to **consider the course from a**

student perspective. From there, work backwards by identifying how well students' needs align with your objectives and the assignments used to assess them.

"Many times," she says, "we talk about what topics we cover instead of articulating the student learning experience. Challenge yourself to succinctly state the benefit for students in taking your course: what can students do as result of the course learning activities?"

Remember that **assessment is a fluid process and it should change over time.** If student needs are no longer being met, it may be necessary to revise an objective or incorporate a new assignment. NILOA advises that it is certainly worth trying something new if it might improve the student learning experience.

Dr. Donat also suggests considering how the language that faculty use in objectives for courses and programs looks to students. Learners should "understand the expectation on day one of the course of what [they] must do to demonstrate they 'get' the material by the end of the course." When writing course objectives, it is vital to ask, **"Would a student with minimal experience in this content area be able to comprehend what is being asked of them and why this goal is relevant to them?"**

Additionally, Dr. Donat commended Messiah's faculty for their dedication to facilitating department-wide discussions that identify and center the most important parts of the curriculum and for giving students pertinent feedback that helps them improve. After all, assessment involves our entire campus community working together to improve student learning.

Ultimately, we need to keep our end goals for our programs and institution throughout the assessment process each year. **Assessments that are effectively designed, defined, and aligned "will ensure that students are equipped to thrive during their time at Messiah, as well as when they become alumni."**

Alignment in Action

Dr. Devi Suberi has put these principles of defining, designing, and aligning course objectives and measures into practice.

Dr. Suberi has included this chart in the syllabus for his CIS 283 Business Systems Applications course. The chart clearly shows each of the measures that will be used for assessment purposes throughout the course. Not only that, but readers can also quickly see how each measure connects to the course objectives, program objectives, and undergraduate learning objectives.

Visual aids like this are beneficial to students and professors because they help them keep the big picture in mind. Students appreciate knowing that the assignments being completed in this class are relevant to the course, their major, and their undergraduate education as a whole. Connecting the dots like this also makes course planning easier for faculty, as they can ensure that their curriculum contains measures that function as small steps to reach a larger goal.

As you consider the steps that your department is taking to improve assessment, take some time to focus on individual objectives and measures, as well as integrating their alignment into the holistic student experience. Stay curious, creative, and collaborative as we begin to wrap up the semester! ———

ULO	PLO	CLO	Measure
1. (Breadth) and depth of knowledge	1. Identify Solutions Analyze a complex computing problem and to apply principles of computing and other relevant disciplines to identify solutions.		
	3. Communication Communicate effectively in a variety of professional contexts.	Demonstrate effective oral, written, and interpersonal skills to communicate facts, concepts and ideas about computer programs and computer programming in a business environment (Development)	VB Team Application Proposal and Presentation (PP)
2. Scholarship	6. Produce Solution Apply computer science theory and software development fundamentals to produce computing-based solutions.	Apply fundamental information science and computing principles and concepts to solve business related problems (Development)	VB Team Project Development (PD)
	2. Solve Given Problem Design, implement, and evaluate a computing-based solution to meet a given set of computing requirements in the context of the program's discipline.	Design, create, test, debug and evaluate computer applications to solve business problems (Development)	Programming Exercise (PE)
3. Specialized Skills	5. Team Function effectively as a member or leader of a team engaged in activities appropriate to the program's discipline.	Contribute, collaborate, and communicate effectively within a team to solve a business problem (Development)	VB Team Project Development (PD)
		Demonstrate a biblical view of cooperation within a team, helping and receiving help from others (Development)	
4. Self-Awareness	4. Ethics Recognize professional responsibilities and make informed judgments in computing practice based on legal and ethical principles.		
	8. Vocation Explain how the biblical call to vocation relates to their potential career options		
5. Faith Knowledge and Application	7. Faith Explain how faith connects to their discipline.	Articulate a Christian faith-based approach to moral decision-making with awareness of the principle laws and ethical issues involving computing (Development)	ACM Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct (EPC)

Sources and Resources

[*Assessing Student Learning: A Common Sense Guide* by Linda Suskie](#)

[Messiah University Assessment Resources](#)

["Playing Matchmaker: Pairing Strong Course Objectives with the Right Assessment Methods" \(Teaching Tuesday Presentation\)](#)

["Sustaining Assessment Efforts" \(Faculty Focus\)](#)

["Unpacking Relationships: Instruction and Student Outcomes" \(NILOA\)](#)



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In This Issue

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Assessing Online: Best Practices for Virtual Learning Assessment

Upcoming Tasks

View assessment results
from 2019-20 in AEFIS
(see page 45 of the [AEFIS
Dean & Chair/Director
User Guide](#))

Enter department
reflection on assessment
results, action plans for
2020-21, closing the loop
information on
previous year action
plans in AEFIS

Contact our office about
changes to assessment
measures or targets

Welcome and Thanks

Jennifer Myers
Work Study, Office of Assessment

Hello, Messiah College community!
What a whirlwind this past semester
has been. We are proud of our
educators' diligent work to quickly
adapt courses and their planning
to prepare for whatever fall might
bring.

The discussion topic of this issue is
assessment of online learning. It is
critical that we continue assessing
students' skills and knowledge,
in spite of having to leave our
traditional classrooms and our
comfort zones. Our office desires to
equip our faculty to evaluate student
learning in online coursework.

This issue's feature article provides
some tips and tricks for effective
assessment of virtual learning.
We included some information
directly from campus resources,
research from nationally-recognized
assessment organizations and
advice from some of our own faculty
who regularly teach and assess
online courses.

If you have questions or want more
information, please feel free to
contact our office. We also have
an updated list of assessment
resources on our website that you
can access at any point.

I would like to extend a special
thank-you to Dr. Leah Clarke and
Dr. Kim Fenstermacher for their
time and willingness to share
parts of their experiences with
virtual assessment with the rest
of our campus community. Thank
you also to Rocky Allinger and
Cindi Kerns for sharing some
of their knowledge and campus
resources for online assessment.
Collaboration is certainly one of our
greatest advantages in the face of
challenging circumstances.

From all of us in the Office of
Assessment, thank you for your
continued dedication to our students
during these tumultuous times.
We hope that you and your family
continue to stay healthy and safe
in the coming months, and we look
forward to seeing you back on
campus soon. Happy reading! —

We want your feedback!

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Assessing Online

Best Practices for Virtual Learning Assessment

Jennifer Myers
Work Study, Office of Assessment

Higher education looks very different now than it did just a few months ago. Classes are completely conducted behind a screen, campuses across the country are bare, and technology has become necessary for learning instead of a supplement.

Yet, in the midst of this chaos, it is as crucial as ever that we continue assessing student learning.

What's the Difference?

Because classes looked different this past semester, assessment inevitably looks different as well.

Professor Kim Fenstermacher notes that “the way information is communicated and organized in an online class” is completely different than face-to-face. “Before we can assess student learning,” she says, “the information has to be delivered to students in a clear and organized manner so they understand the requirements of the assignment.

It also means requires assessment in variety of ways. According to Cindi Kerns and Rocky Allinger, faculty should conduct online assessments frequently, take time to add personal feedback and make assessments relevant to the world offline.

We must also consider the fact that we are not just teaching online, but teaching in the midst of a global state of crisis.

This complicates learning and assessment even more, as the U.S. Department of Education has permitted flexibility in accreditation, many schools (including Messiah) have changed grading policies, and many students and staff may not feel well equipped to learn and teach virtually.

Tips from the Pros

The National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA) offers three main recommendations for online assessment during this pandemic. The first is to understand that **the complexity of our current educational circumstances requires some additional creativity.**

Dr. Fenstermacher advises faculty to consider “the level of student stress, particularly when the ‘shift’ to online learning is not their preferred way of learning” and “to be willing to be creative” in how faculty deliver and assess course content.

Second, we should emphasize **compassion over compliance.** While maintaining policies and accreditation standards is important, we must first and foremost extend graceful hearts and helping hands (from a safe distance) to make assessment meaningful.

Dr. Clarke shares, “Give yourself grace when things don’t go right. Creating a sense of collaboration with students and colleagues will help everyone feel that they are in these efforts together.”

This can take the form of student surveys, personal checking in with colleagues, and understanding that productivity may look different for you right now.

Lastly, **learning is more important than data collection.** While data is an essential part of the assessment process, it is educators’ discussions and actions to ensure student success that make assessment efforts worthwhile

Dr. Fenstermacher points out that “the assessment data has to be evaluated and used for improvement. It can’t just be something we collect; it has to be meaningful.”

Dr. Clarke also offers some great wisdom on this subject: “As we often say in counseling you have to trust the process.... Not clinging too tightly to our plans and including as many voices as possible in the process can get us meaningful results we can use.”

How Can We Improve?

Moving forward, Dr. Clarke hopes “our perception of what learning can look like is expanded and I hope that we feel excited about engaging our students in different ways.” After all, “Online learning asks students to be more independent learners which is a good set-up for becoming a lifelong learner.”

In our context, learning has been pushed to new bounds that many of us never expected. It has been a humbling reminder that every day is a chance to learn something new.

Dr. Fenstermacher adds, “I hope that the campus community has learned that students can learn quite well in an online environment when the courses are well designed and assessment is thoughtfully considered... I also hope that faculty will realize how incredibly resilient we can be in the face of challenging times.”

As we enter into summer and a new academic year, may we hold our heads high knowing that our campus persevered, learned something new about the growing platform of virtual learning and serves a God who uses all circumstances for our good (Romans 8:28).

As always, please feel free to reach out to our office if there is anything we can assist you with regarding your assessment tasks. Kate and Susan would be happy to meet with you. We also encourage you to visit the resources below for additional information and strategies for assessing online learning.

Sources and Resources

[“Accreditation and Assessment Resources When the Unexpected Happens” \(Weave\)](#)

[The Difference Between Emergency Remote Teaching and Online Learning \(Educause\)](#)

[Messiah Assessment Resources](#)

[NILOA Webinar](#)

[“7 Assessment Challenges of Moving Your Course Online \(and a Dozen+ Solutions\)” \(Faculty Focus\)](#)



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MESSIAH COLLEGE

NEWSLETTER

In This Issue

**Welcome and
Thanks**

**The Rubric
Rundown:
The Benefits of
Rubrics and
The Best Tool for
Using Them**

Upcoming Tasks

**Developing Action
Plans**

**Annual
Assessment
Survey**

**Update
Assessment Plans**

Welcome and Thanks

Molly Sherman
Work Study, Office of Assessment

Hello again, Messiah College Community! As the semester wraps up, we wanted to update you with one final issue of our newsletter for this academic year.

The topic of this issue is rubrics. This is an aspect of assessment that, when used effectively, can significantly benefit our teachers and students.

We hope that the feature article in this issue will help our faculty understand why creating and using rubrics thoughtfully is so important, and how using Canvas for our rubrics can help us get the most out of our rubrics and benefit assessment, as well.

We are also accompanying this issue of the newsletter with a Rubric Resource Handout on our website, if you want to learn more about rubrics!

Lastly, I'd like to give a few shout outs to some members of our community who have helped make this newsletter a reality.

Sustaining the newsletter and keeping it relevant to you has required a lot of thought, planning, and work, and not just on our part in the Office of Assessment. Additionally, because I am a graduating senior, this is the last issue of the newsletter that I will be working on! So, I wanted to thank each individual who took the time out of their schedule to interview for our stories.

To Dr. Andy Babyak, Dr. Kris Cravey, Dr. Raeann Hamon, Professor Krista Imbesi, Cindi Kerns, Dr. Rob Pepper, and Ashley Sider, thank you for allowing us to tell your stories and share your wisdom with the rest of the Messiah community. This newsletter couldn't happen without you! _____

We Take Suggestions

Is there an area of assessment that you think you could help others in, or a problem you need help with? We created this newsletter for you, so we'd love to include it in the next issue.

Send your requests to wsassess@messiah.edu

The Rubric Rundown

The Benefits of Rubrics and The Best Tool for Using Them

Molly Sherman

Office of Assessment Work Study

Have you ever lost sleep due to the piles of student work you needed to grade? Gotten carpal tunnel from writing comments on student work?

These are a few signs that you could benefit from using rubrics.

Putting work into rubrics on the front end can **save you a significant amount of time and effort** later in the grading process.

Professor Krista Imbesi has found this to be true. Professor Imbesi says **using rubrics makes grading faster**, because different performance levels for an assignment have already been identified; all she has to do is assign the appropriate level to each student.

Rubrics also help educators to **think more deeply** about what they are looking for in student work.

Dr. Andy Babyak says that, “teachers are able to **grade in a more meaningful manner** as they use the rubric.”

Professor Imbesi agrees. She has discovered that rubrics help her grade more thoughtfully, “**because I’m not just trying to ambiguously give comments and then come up with a number.**”

When you’ve given careful thought to the different aspects of student work that you will be grading, your grading will be more intentional.

And the benefits aren’t limited to you, either!

Dr. Babyak says that when you use rubrics, it helps students succeed.

“**Students have a clear picture of what is going to be graded** before they submit, and they are able to have a **better understanding of what they need to improve** after they receive the instructor’s feedback via a rubric,” Dr. Babyak says.

When assignment directions and our criticisms are clear, **students perform better on assignments**, and will be better equipped to do well on the next one. Plus, as a benefit for you, making the assignment clear results in **less confusion**, and with more transparency in the grading process, you will have **fewer grade contestations** from students.

But these benefits won’t come to you overnight.

Professor Imbesi says that “**It has been a process to come up with rubrics that work well.**” So, you do have to put a significant amount of work into your rubrics before you use them, and continually revise them.

Fortunately, a great tool for building rubrics that will help make using them easier and more effective is right at your fingertips—and it’s called **Canvas!**

Professor Imbesi says that **grading is faster when using the Canvas rubric feature** because, “I can just go to my rubric and click, click, click,” to assign grades.

The rubric feature is also very flexible.

Instructional Designer Cindi Kerns says, “If you want a holistic rubric, **Canvas can do that**. If you want to remove the points from the rubric, you can do that. You can even have multiple rating systems.”

Professor Imbesi has experienced the flexibility of Canvas rubrics firsthand. She uses a holistic rubric for most of her assignments, and she says **the rubric feature accommodates that easily**.

The rubric feature also allows you to build your own library of rubrics, **so you don’t have to re-create rubrics each time you teach a course**. You can simply edit them as needed.

This capability can also **help us assess student learning more effectively**. Canvas can share these library rubrics with instructors teaching the same course, which helps with consistency, Kerns says.

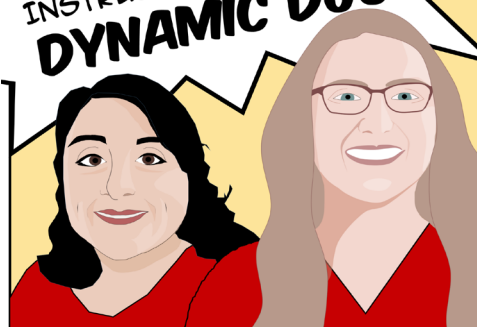
For program level assessment, you can set AEFIS to pull data from individual criterion lines on Canvas rubrics. That way, you **collect more accurate and specific data for each of your learning objectives**.

This might sound like a lot, but you are not in it alone! Cindi Kerns encourages faculty to **contact her or visit the ITS blog** for more information on creating rubrics on Canvas. And if you need any help with assessment-related tasks, **Kate and Susan are always happy to meet with you.**

NEED HELP BUILDING RUBRICS ON CANVAS?

NEVER FEAR, ROCKY AND CINDY ARE HERE!

INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN DYNAMIC DUO



WANT TO USE MORE TECHNOLOGY IN YOUR INSTRUCTION?

ROCKY & CINDY ARE HERE TO HELP! WE’VE GOT THE EDTECH & INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN KNOW-HOW TO HELP YOU MAKE YOUR IDEAS A REALITY.

CONTACT US FOR AN APPT.

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NEWSLETTER

In This Issue:

Director's
Welcome

Engaging
Stakeholders:
Different
Strategies for
Different Groups

Looking Ahead:
Upcoming
Assessment Tasks

Looking Ahead:

Upcoming
Assessment Tasks

AEFIS Mapping to
Direct Embedded
Measures

Annual Major/
Program Rubric
Scoring

Curriculum Mapping

Director's Welcome

Kate Oswald Wilkins



Greetings, campus community, and welcome to the first edition of the Assessment of Student Learning newsletter.

Our goal for this publication is to resource educators and administrators in their assessment work, as well as share information about student learning assessment processes and performance at Messiah. We hope you gain **new ideas about how to assess student learning** in your department or office, and we invite you to **celebrate your colleagues' success stories**. It takes the collective efforts of the excellent educators and staff across campus to ensure our students are achieving Messiah's educational outcomes. Thank you for the role you play in serving our students and the mission of this institution.

Effective learning assessment requires collaboration—so in our first edition, we focus on **ways to engage various stakeholders in your department's assessment efforts**.

By building bridges between individual offices'/departments' assessment efforts and **internal stakeholders** like department faculty, students, staff, general education, student affairs, and campus leaders, we learn to see the interconnectedness of our efforts and we can discover new ways to improve the coherence of students' educational experiences. By building bridges with **external stakeholders** such as alumni, employers, and members of institutional oversight groups, we can gain new perspectives on our educational objectives and programming in relation to the rapidly changing world around us.

If you're thinking "Sure, I can see the benefits, but...how can I do any of this and still do the rest of my job?" **then this edition is for you.**

We need to make assessment meaningful, but we need to make it manageable as well. Thanks for reading! —————

We Take Suggestions

Is there an area you think you could help others in, or a problem you need help with? This newsletter is made with you in mind, so we'd love to include it in the next issue.

Send your requests to Molly at wsassess@messiah.edu

Engaging Stakeholders: Different Strategies for Different Groups

Molly Sherman

Office of Assessment Work Study

As you all know, our goal for stakeholder engagement is to involve all relevant stakeholders in the creation, revision, implementation, analysis, and improvement of our assessment plans. That can sound like an overwhelming task. But many of our departments have found success in this area and felt the benefits of effective stakeholder engagement.

Here are a few examples of superb stakeholder engagement from some of our departments and programs. We hope that you can learn from them and celebrate their successes with them!

Faculty

Our hope when it comes to this group of stakeholders is that all departments would involve all faculty, including some adjuncts, in assessment efforts and discussions. A significant benefit here is that we gain a greater understanding of collective efforts and how their pieces contribute to shared outcomes.

Dr. Rob Pepper, Dean of the School of Graduate Studies, realizes the **importance of engaging adjunct faculty in assessment discussions**. An adjunct-taught course may even have a “course shepherd” who is responsible for that course.

“The course shepherd works with that adjunct to make sure the course is run correctly,” Dr. Pepper says.

This ensures that assessment results are consistent, and that **students are ready for the next class.**”

Prospective

Our best method for engaging prospective students is sharing objectives and assessment outcomes on department websites and at open house presentations. This will help improve transparency and spread a greater understanding of the outcomes and effectiveness of our programs, which will catch the attention of prospective students.

“**And their parents,**” adds Dr. Raeann Hamon, Chair of the HDFS Department.

“**Individuals aren’t making decisions in vacuums.** Their families are part of these decisions, and so we need to be talking to parents as well.” Dr. Hamon features alumni on the department website and pamphlets, so prospective students and their parents can see the success coming from the HDFS department.

Students

Many of you interact with this group of stakeholders on a daily basis! We definitely recommend that you talk to current students for feedback. Consider asking for a select student or group of students to give feedback on aspects such as program learning objectives, course offerings, and sequencing, so as to encourage more systematic engagement.

“**Our program has evolved based on student feedback,**” says Dr. Kris Cravey, Director of Graduate Programs in Business and Leadership.

Dr. Cravey says he does “a lot of independent inquiries, where **I’ll schedule some time to meet with a student and just talk about the program.**” He also selects one current student to serve on the board of advisors, since students have a vested interest in the program’s success.

Alumni

We also aim to keep alumni involved after they have left Messiah.

Dr. Hamon’s department sends out an alumni survey. Both she and Dr. Kravey have also included alumni in their advisory boards.

But how do you find alumni to contribute to your assessment efforts? Ashley Sider, Assistant Director of Alumni & Parent Relations, says that there are always alumni who are interested in serving their alma mater.

“We have **28,000 living alumni.** There’s **always a pool we can draw from,**” Sider says. The issue is plugging them into departments in a way that is actually useful.

Sider encourages departments to **communicate their needs to the Office of Alumni & Parent Relations.**

That way, their office can let alumni know of any available opportunities and connect alumni to departments in helpful ways.

The Community

Individuals outside of Messiah College can also help inform our programs. Involving professionals in the assessment process can help maintain their positive images of Messiah and keep our programs relevant.

Dr. Cravey’s program includes industry professionals in their board of advisors.

This helps the program “**ensure we are staying relevant and adequately preparing students,**” says Dr. Cravey.

The board asks those professionals about the big challenges in their field to make sure the program prepares students and **appropriately addresses the needs of the community.** —————

Want to learn more?

Visit the Assessment of Student Learning page at Messiah.edu for resources to help you with engaging stakeholders and other assessment tasks.