Annual Report on Student Learning Outcomes Assessment at NYIT:

AY2008-2009

Assessment Committee, Academic Senate
May 1, 2009

This is the first annual report on Assessment prepared by the Assessment Committee of NYIT’s Academic Senate for use by the NYIT community. Its purpose is to draw attention to assessment-related actions and outcomes by the committee, the faculty, and the administration during the year and to make suggestions for improvement. The ultimate goal is to improve student learning at NYIT.

A single, university-wide assessment process was established

In spring 2007, the Assessment Committee introduced a step-by-step, ongoing approach to assessment, based on Middle States criteria specifying that assessment should be “useful, cost-effective, reasonably accurate and truthful, carefully planned and organized, systematic, and sustained.” Rather than continuing with the then-existing process (i.e., four or five programs complete a large self-study each year, modeled on those of professional accrediting agencies, repeated every seven years), the committee revised the process. The new process, endorsed by the Academic Senate as a whole, made student learning outcomes assessment an annual, continuing activity for faculty in all of NYIT’s academic programs.

The committee's goals are to:

• Raise the visibility of student learning outcomes assessment within NYIT;
• Maintain a common, unified, mission-driven process for all of NYIT’s academic programs;
• Improve teaching and learning by increasing faculty participation in and knowledge of assessment;
• Provide meaningful feedback to deans and faculty regarding their assessment plans and results by engaging them in useful conversation with Committee members about how well the program is helping students achieve stated learning outcomes; and
• Prepare a formal annual report on the status of assessment at the university, including recommendations for improvement.

The elements of NYIT’s annual process for assessing student learning outcomes in academic programs are:

• Faculty members create annual assessment plans: they agree on which aspects of their programs will be assessed and how, assign responsibilities, and establish timelines.
• In addition to program-specific outcomes, assessment plans for undergraduate programs also include assessment of a core learning outcome designated by the Assessment
Committee to be examined across the university, intended to stimulate conversations about improving general education outcomes among the full range of departments and schools.

- Assessment plans for the year are submitted to the committee, which reviews and discusses them and provides feedback to the dean and program faculty.
- The plan is implemented: data are collected and analyzed and an improvement action plan is developed.
- Assessment reports for the year, summarizing the assessment activities, analyses, and improvement plans are submitted to the committee, which reviews these documents and provides feedback.
- The Assessment Committee prepares a formal report on assessment across the university.

**A variety of actions were taken in to strengthen assessment at NYIT**

- *The authority and membership of the Assessment Committee of the Academic Senate was strengthened and its oversight responsibility enlarged.*

In fall 2008, NYIT’s Academic Senate charged its Assessment Committee to be responsible for oversight of student learning outcomes assessment throughout the university. Its charge, to serve as an institutional feedback mechanism for deans and faculty, was expanded to include programs with professional, external accreditation. The committee, working with the academic deans, defined 45 programs to be reviewed (combining, in some cases, a number of concentrations into one, overall “program” for assessment purposes).

The committee was also formally mandated to prepare an annual report on Assessment for the Senate, the president and the provost. This report, scheduled to be available as a resource in the decision-making process for the annual budget and tying institutional planning directly to assessment of student learning outcomes, reviews and evaluates the assessment activities, offers recommendations and proposes changes to policy that strengthen both assessment and data-driven efforts to improve student learning.

Composed of faculty from all of NYIT’s academic schools, as well as staff from the libraries and Student Affairs, the committee continues to be chaired by the vice president for planning and assessment. The number of faculty representatives from each school was increased and academic deans and their designated representatives are *ex officio* members. In addition, the provost, the associate provost, the director for the center for teaching and learning, the dean of operations, assessment and accreditation for global academic programs, and the assessment coordinator are *ex officio* members.

- *The Senate Curriculum Committee established a subcommittee on Student Learning Outcomes Assessment for proposed new courses and programs.*

Proposals for new courses and programs are reviewed by the Curriculum Committee of NYIT’s Academic Senate before coming to the full Senate for approval. The committee’s rules and procedures require that:
“All proposals for new programs or significant program modifications must include clear and compelling analyses of five areas: centrality, quality, feasibility/financial viability, marketability, and outcomes assessment. Outcomes Assessment plans must include program goals, objectives, and description of assessment instruments; and course syllabi must provide alignment among the goals and objectives of the program and [those of] the course.”

In fall 2008, the Committee strengthened its outcomes assessment review process by creating a subcommittee on student learning outcomes assessment charged with reporting to the Committee on the adequacy of assessment processes contained in each proposal. To ensure consistency, the subcommittee includes faculty members who also hold membership in the Assessment Committee; it is chaired by the assistant provost and director of the center for teaching and learning.

- **Assessment policies, resources and outcomes are collected in one web site**

A section of the planning & assessment web site focused on student learning outcomes assessment was created:
http://www.nyit.edu/planning_and_assessment/student_learning_outcomes_assessment/

The site contains links to the assessment committee goals and members, a description of the annual assessment process, a matrix of assessment reports and plans submitted by academic programs, sources of support for assessment activities including guidelines for plans and reports, samples of each, and links to assessment resources.

- **Faculty expertise has been developed and supported.**

**Workshops.** Four 80-minute on-campus workshops on the “how-to’s” of student learning outcomes assessment were launched (See Table 6 for workshop descriptions). Designed and conducted jointly by Francine Glazer, Assistant Provost and Director of the Center for Teaching and Learning, and Michael Uttendorfer, Dean of the School of Education, each workshop was offered four times during a two-month period; participation was mandatory for the entire series for all academic administrators, program chairs, and directors, and strongly encouraged for faculty. Faculty workshops were held at NYIT’s global campuses as well.

Feedback from the workshops indicated that those who attended were well prepared to carry out their assessment responsibilities. Most syllabi and student learning outcomes statements showed clear improvement following the sessions; similarly, many learning assessment plans for the coming year were well conceived.
2008-2009 Faculty Workshop Series on Student Learning Assessment

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workshop Title</th>
<th>Goals</th>
<th>Schedule</th>
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<tr>
<td>Goals, Objectives and Learning Outcomes 101:</td>
<td>This workshop is designed to guide participants through the process of developing student learning outcomes that meet the requirements for internal program assessment and external accrediting agencies. Workshop attendees learn how to write learning outcomes that are student-centered, clearly stated and measurable.</td>
<td>September 23, October 7, 16, 30, 2008</td>
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<td>Developing Student Learning Outcomes</td>
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<td>Goals, Objectives and Learning Outcomes 201:</td>
<td>This workshop provides an overview of a model used for matching program goals and outcomes to specific courses and student learning outcomes. Participants use a matrix to align goals, standards, and student learning outcomes.</td>
<td>November 11, 13, December 2, 4, 2008</td>
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<td>Aligning Program Goals and Course Objectives</td>
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<td>Assessment 301: Outcomes Measurement and Assessments</td>
<td>This workshop provides guidance in creating authentic assessments that are aligned to program objectives and student learning outcomes within a course. A variety of instruments for assessment are illustrated and discussed.</td>
<td>February 24, 26, March 3, 10</td>
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<td>Assessment 401: Analysis, Action and Reassessment</td>
<td>This workshop “closes the loop” for the assessment cycle. Participants will learn to use data for course and program evaluation. Data analysis techniques illustrate how student learning outcomes data can be used to inform instruction and improve teaching and learning.</td>
<td>March 24, 26, 31, April 2</td>
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Consultation. The workshops were followed by individualized consultations between the director of the Center for Teaching and Learning/the Assessment Coordinator and small groups of faculty from individual programs to apply the information discussed at the workshop to their own programs and courses.

Conferences. To further a culture of assessment, the Provost’s office provided financial support for faculty members to attend relevant assessment conferences. In October 2008, seven participants attended the 2008 Assessment Institute at Illinois University-Purdue University, Indianapolis; five also participated in the pre-conference workshop “Never Enough Time to Work on Assessment.” In December 2008, the president of the Academic Senate attended the ABET Faculty Workshop on Assessing Program Outcomes. Three campus leaders attended “Fostering a Campus Culture of Assessment” Middle States conference in February 2009.
Institutional capacity and expertise were improved through new staffing.

Three new staff members were hired during the year, each with responsibility for assisting faculty assessment activities:

- Francine Glazer, Ph.D., Assistant Provost and Director, Center for Teaching and Learning, joined NYIT in September 2008. Active in the scholarship of teaching and learning and with extensive experience in all aspects of faculty development, including devising appropriate student learning outcomes and assessment of academic programs, her responsibilities include working with departments and with individual faculty members on all aspects of course, program and curriculum development. She also chairs the student learning outcomes subcommittee of the Academic Senate Curriculum Committee.

- Patricia Burlaud, Ph.D., Dean of Operations, Assessments and Accreditation, joined the Office of Global Academic Programs in August 2008. As part of her responsibilities, she is coordinating assessment activities at global campuses and ensuring they are consistent with activities at NYIT’s campuses in New York. A scientist by training, she came to NYIT from Zayed University, where she was responsible for the entire assessment of student learning in the General Education Core Curriculum (Colloquy) on both ZU campuses.

- Shifang Li, Ed.D., Assessment Coordinator, joined the Office of Planning and Assessment in January 2009. As part of her responsibilities, she serves as principal staff for the Academic Senate’s Assessment Committee, serves on the student learning outcomes assessment subcommittee of the Senate Curriculum Committee, and works directly with faculty members on their assessment activities.

2008-2009 Outcomes

- Program outcomes were reviewed, course outcomes were aligned with program outcomes, and course syllabi were revised to reflect any changes.

In summer 2008, the provost and academic deans mandated an institution-wide review of program outcomes in light of the evolving goals of the university and the demands of 21st century professions.

- 95% of NYIT’s academic programs revised and updated their learning outcomes (3 programs are undergoing planned revisions, after which new learning outcomes will be submitted to the committee)
- 91% of NYIT’s academic programs prepared matrices showing the relationship between course objectives and program objectives
Deans and faculty were charged with collecting and reviewing course syllabi to ensure they contained correct program and course learning outcomes as well as appropriate professional standards.

- **University-wide assessment days were established to raise visibility and focus attention on student learning outcomes assessment.**
  - More than 200 NYIT faculty members participated in the January 15, 2009 Assessment Day discussions and activities.

- **Faculty Members Assessed Student Learning Outcomes within Academic Programs and made reports to the Assessment Committee.**
  - 100% of academic programs submitted reports on their fall 2008 assessment activities for committee review and feedback.

At a special all-day meeting on February 13th, members of the Assessment Committee reviewed the program learning outcomes, curriculum matrices linking program and course outcomes, and assessment reports for all NYIT’s academic programs.

The committee review considered the following questions, and, after discussing the answers, formulated its feedback: What question(s) were the program faculty members trying to answer? What evidence did they look at? How did they evaluate the evidence? What conclusion(s) did they draw? What steps are they planning to take to improve student learning? Are accountabilities and a timeline specified?

- **Faculty Members prepared Assessment Plans for spring09-fall 09-spring10**
  - 91% of academic programs submitted Assessment Plans for the coming semester for committee review and feedback

At its April 23, 2009, members of the Assessment Committee reviewed plans for the coming year, considering the following questions, based on the guidelines, and provided feedback to program chairs and deans: What learning outcomes were identified? What direct and/or indirect measures were identified? Were benchmarks for success identified? Does the plan contain a timetable for action steps with deadlines and responsibilities defined?

- **All materials submitted to the Assessment Committee are posted on the Assessment web site as links in a matrix organized by academic school**

The site makes possible sharing of best practices across schools and programs. The section of the site for the school of Architecture and Design is reproduced below.
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<thead>
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<th>Program</th>
<th>Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Outcome Matrix</th>
<th>08-09 Plans</th>
<th>08-09 Activity Reports</th>
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<th>09-10 Activity Reports</th>
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<td>Architecture (B.Arch.)</td>
<td>Learning Outcomes</td>
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<td>Activity Report from the School</td>
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<td>Student Performance Criteria</td>
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<td>Architectural Technology (BSAT)</td>
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<td>Activity Report from the School</td>
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<td>SPC Survey</td>
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<td>Interior Design (B.F.A.)</td>
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<td>Urban and Regional Design (MURD)</td>
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Recommendations

Educate the faculty about the information that has/will become available through the data warehouse.

With the coming on-line of the data warehouse project, committee members suggest that faculty be made aware of the kind of information contained in the warehouse that can help them with their program assessment and accreditation tasks.

Educate committee members about the core curriculum assessment process and integrate core curriculum program revisions and assessment into the committee’s schedule

Two features of the core curriculum revision process have relevance to the assessment committee:

1. It is outcomes-based and all undergraduate degree programs are required to make revisions to their curricula to integrate core competencies through graduation. The committee will need to review the ways in which academic programs accomplish this integration and ensure that learning outcomes statements, curriculum matrices, and assessment plans reflect these changes.
2. Students’ mastery of the core competencies will be assessed in capstone assignments at the freshman level, the midpoint and the end of their undergraduate careers. This assessment strategy is designed to provide information about the efficacy of individual courses and the development of students’ skills. The committee will need to integrate review of core assessment into its annual process.

Integrate global assessment

Learning outcomes for global programs at NYIT’s locations abroad are the same as in New York, and are assessed in similar ways. Recently, local faculty members in Abu Dhabi, Amman, Bahrain, Nanjing and Vancouver formed local assessment committees. During the 2009-2010 academic year, the Assessment Committee in New York will be working to initiate cross-campus discussions of assessment.

Continue the conversation: how much is “sustainable”?

Feedback from the Middle States visiting team indicated that NYIT has many exemplary assessment practices. It also raised the question of sustainability: Do we have the culture and commitment necessary to continue and improve in this area? Committee members, in reviewing assessment plans for the coming year, have noted that some programs focus on a limited number of questions and plan study in depth, while others assess every objective in every section of every course. The conversation about whether there is a “right” or “preferred” approach – begun in the committee this spring – will continue with the wider faculty over the months to come.