

History of SUNY-wide Assessment

1988 Provost Joseph Burke calls for the revitalization of assessment efforts, with an eye toward fulfilling two complementary goals: to improve institutional performance and to demonstrate effectiveness in undergraduate education.

1996 The University Faculty Senate (UFS) holds Symposium on General Education at SUNY-Albany.

1997 A joint UFS/FCCC (Faculty Council of Community Colleges) Task Force on General Education recommends that each SUNY campus file an assessment plan of its General Education program with SUNY System Administration for sharing with other campuses.

SUNY Provost Peter Salins announces that assessment of student outcomes is a top priority to raise academic aspirations and standards, and outlines his idea of a “rising junior standardized test across the SUNY system.” The idea meets with strong faculty opposition.

1998 UFS Plenary session, held at SUNY-Stony Brook, focuses on assessment. Dr. Barbara Cambridge (then Director of Assessment for the American Association for Higher Education) and representatives from 3 SUNY campuses are invited to present and discuss their assessment programs. The conclusion was that campus-based assessment was more appropriate academically and would be far less costly than system-wide assessment utilizing some form of standardized test.

1999 (Fall) SUNY Provost Peter Salins creates the Provost’s Advisory Task Force on the Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes and charges the group to:

- Examine and discuss the issues involved in implementing undergraduate student learning outcomes assessment today -- specifically, in the context of a large and diverse university system such as the State University of New York,
and to make recommendations regarding:
- A process for assessing student learning outcomes and intellectual growth in General Education and the Major that will provide the faculty and academic leadership with an important and effective way of improving the quality of undergraduate education, and the University with a coherent and meaningful longitudinal data base with which to be accountable to its stakeholders.

- 2000 (April) Provost's Advisory Task Force on the Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes presents its preliminary report outlining its recommended *SUNY Assessment Initiative* to UFS, who discuss and approve the report.
- (Nov) The Provost's Advisory Task Force formally releases its report. Key recommendations include:
- Reference to both campus-based and system-wide assessment, both for general education and the major
 - Called on campuses to develop General Education assessment plans, to be approved by their campus' Faculty Senate prior to submission to SUNY
 - Proposed creation of a General Education Assessment Review (GEAR) group to review campus plans for SUNY approval
 - Outlined the General Education learning outcomes to be assessed, covering the areas of: Mathematics, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, American History, Western Civilization, Other World Civilizations, Humanities, the Arts, Foreign Language, Basic Communication (Written and Oral), as well as the two competencies of Critical Thinking and Information Management.
 - Recommended implementation schedules for each of: General Education assessment, (SUNY) University-wide assessment, and Program Reviews. Key deadlines for General Education assessment include:
 - May 2002: Gen Ed assessment plans due to GEAR
 - AY 2002-2003: Full implementation of Gen Ed Assessment
- 2001 (Oct) GEAR issues guidelines for its review of campus-submitted General Education assessment plans.
- University-wide assessment sits largely unaddressed, in spite of the Provost's Task Force's recommended timeframe.
- 2002 (March) Campus General Education assessment plans due to GEAR.
- (Fall) Campus implementation of General Education assessment due to begin on 3-year cycle.
- 2003 (Apr) A joint FCCC/UFS Value-Added Assessment Discussion Group (VAADG) is formed to work with Vice Provost Donald Steven.
- (Jun) Campus Chief Academic Officer's first report on General Education assessment results due.
- (Jun) SUNY Board of Trustees passes resolution (June 17, 2003) calling

for a “University-wide process that will periodically assess, using common measures, State University students’ attainment in the general education learning outcomes in Mathematics, Basic Communication, Critical Thinking (Reasoning), Information Management, and the understanding of the methods scientists and social scientists use to explore phenomena.” [Note: This resolution was later abandoned due to a flurry of campus faculty senate resolutions in opposition. *Strengthened Campus Based Assessment* passes June 2004 as a compromise between SUNY and UFS.]

(Fall) UFS, FCCC, and faculty Senates from campuses across the system pass resolutions in opposition to the June 17 SUNY Board of Trustees resolution on value-added assessment.

(Fall) A “time-out” is called in order for UFS and SUNY System Administration to come to some agreement about University-wide assessment.

2004 (Apr) UFS adopts proposal for *Strengthened Campus Based Assessment* which calls for “externally referenced” testing for 3 General Education learning outcomes: Critical Thinking, Writing, and Mathematics. They also suggest needed revisions to GEAR assessment plan review guidelines in order to avoid an additional layer of assessment on top of what is already required.

(Jun) SUNY Board of Trustees adopts resolution on *Strengthened Campus Based Assessment*.

(Oct/Nov) Proposed GEAR guidelines for *Strengthened Campus Based Assessment* are circulated for campus feedback.

(Nov) Revised Mathematics outcomes are circulated for campus feedback, after original outcomes of Arithmetic, Algebra, and Geometry receive widespread criticism by Mathematics faculty SUNY-wide.

2005 (Feb) GEAR guidelines for *Strengthened Campus Based Assessment* are finalized and distributed to each campus President with a cover letter outlining time frames and acknowledging concerns raised by campuses in their feedback. SUNY forms 3 system-wide faculty panels, each corresponding to one of the target outcomes (Mathematics, Critical Thinking, and Writing), to develop acceptable rubrics as one of the acceptable methods of assessment under the GEAR guidelines. Other methods include existing nationally normed tests or a campus-based instrument validated against existing nationally normed measures.