

Proposal for University Assessment Funds, 2004-05

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Update on the 2003-04 Funding Request

For 2003-04, I requested support for two items.

Part 1. Assessment Workshop

The first was funding to support a ½ day workshop entitled “Academic Program Assessment – What Works at UW-Madison”. This item was funded with a \$2500 award.

The program for the workshop, held in December 2003, is attached. More than 80 faculty and staff from across campus participated. The assistance of OHRD was critical to the successful delivery of this workshop.

We conducted a review of the workshop and discussed the findings in at the February assessment council meeting. Council members agreed that the workshop was useful for participants. Council members recommended that more workshops, seminars, and information sessions on assessment should be provided and these events will help us develop a community of assessment. In addition, council members recommended that some of these events be used to establish a stronger connection between practices of assessment and program assessment and issues related to teaching and learning.

Part 2. Project Assistant for Assessment Council Support

The second request in 2003-04 was for a 50% PA to assist with the work of the assessment council. Peter Spear agreed to that award – a draft memo that was prepared to document the award is attached. In the end, our office was able to fund a PA from a different funding source and we did not finalize the awarding of the funds.

Funding Request for 2004-05

Part 1. Assessment Workshops and Seminars

As described above, assessment council members recommended that more workshops, seminars, and information sessions on assessment should be provided to the university community. The goal of increased opportunities for professional development would be to build a community of assessment. The outcome of that decision was that the assessment council decided, that for 2004-05, they would suspend most of the regular business meetings. Instead that council asked the co-chairs (Bob Ray and Jocelyn Milner) to organize a series of four to six workshops, seminars, forums, or other professional development activities.

There are several areas related to assessment for which additional attention would be of great value. For example:

- Connect the practice of academic assessment and student learning in the context of a program with the teaching and learning enterprise and course-based practice.
- Provide specific case studies of what works for UW-Madison. Especially provide models of assessment projects that evaluate student learning directly. Examples include projects that evaluate student performance, collectively, at a program milestone.

We would draw on successful assessment programs, especially those that have received assessment funding in recent years. Most of the events would use local speakers. At least one event would bring in a nationally recognized expert.

We have discussed the opportunity for collaboration with WISCAPE and OHRD. Both units are interested in working together on an assessment series.

Part 2. Assessment and Accountability

Roles and responsibilities associated with assessment are distributed. The deans and the program faculty are primarily responsible for conducting assessment and assuring that students are meeting the goals set for them.

In my role as the provost's point-person on assessment, I need to bridge the gap between the program faculty and staff in their role, and the very real external pressures for institutional accountability on student outcomes assessment. What is the evidence that our students are learning? This is a big question and one that is constantly asked by external agencies – legislators, accreditors, higher education critics, students and their families. It's a hard question and one for which there are few good models. It's a question we need to spend some time thinking about, and researching and planning for. It's a question we need a credible answer for.

We plan to take two approaches. The first approach is the straightforward one of investing the time to look for models among our peers. We will review the literature, review conference proceedings from AAHE's assessment conference and other venues, and explore this problem with our colleagues at our peer institutions. This will overlap naturally with the workshop planning activities. This research approach will help us identify and devise models that can be modified to be applied at UW-Madison.

Our second approach is more practical, and makes use of the alumni database. This is a potentially rich resource for assessment. And its potential is unrecognized by many. The UW Foundation and the WAA, between them, maintain a database of more than 300,000 UW-Madison alumni. We want to explore the database and develop analytical reports that will illustrate, by program, characteristics of their alumni. In the beginning, we anticipate that the most useful information will come from analysis of geographic distribution of alumni over time. Eventually, we hope to use this information to answer questions about employment patterns.

Staff

Jocelyn Milner will direct the project. Clare Huhn, Institutional Planner in APA, will assist with the alumni database analysis. OHRD will be asked to help with planning the seminar series (they have assisted with the ½ day workshop for the past two years). The PA is to be identified.

Budget

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| Seminars, forum, and workshop support | \$ 4,000 |
| Two visits to other institutions or conference attendance | \$ 3,000 |
| WAA database (4D) license and software | \$ 1,800 |
| Project Assistant – 37.5% | \$14,000 |
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| | \$22,800 |

Role of the PA:

- assist Bob and Jocelyn with planning and delivery of the workshops; assist with University Assessment Council activities (membership issues, scheduling, correspondence, agendas, minutes, filing);
- assist with the compilation of the annual report on assessment from the schools and colleges;
- review recent assessment reports and compile examples of good assessment practice at UW-Madison;
- where appropriate, assist with analysis of survey data.

These are duties that Jocelyn would otherwise do and the assistance of a PA will allow Jocelyn time to focus on analysis of student learning outcomes.