**Assessment Response for: Academic Skills Center**

**Assessment Committee Contact Person: Melissa Mercer-Tachick**

**Plan also reviewed by: Beth Lincoln**

Thank you for the hard work that went into your assessment plan. As we carefully reviewed your Steps, it became clear just how much thought and effort went into your work. There were some real strengths in your work, and we celebrate these with you!

In general, there were a few themes that the Assessment Committee noticed. First, it is most helpful when the progression from Step 2 to Step 3 and Step 3 to Step 4 are clear. That is, after you have articulated your learning goals, the clearest proposals are explicit in how the courses/experiences in Step 3 directly support the learning goals. And Step 4 should take full advantage of all of the places in Step 3 where data might be collected. Second, make strategic use of both direct and indirect measures, and think about whether data can be collected at the beginning, during the program of study, and at the end. This gives a richer sense of where and when your work contributes strongly to learning goals and where improvements might be made. Third, make your plan manageable! All data need not be collected annually; some can be done every other year. And you may choose not to measure for all of your learning goals right now. Make claims that you can (a) intellectually, ethically stand behind and (b) find resources to measure.

Please feel free to contact either of us with questions about your feedback. We want to help your assessment plan be successful in collecting relevant data to inform your work! We will be happy to work with you toward timely completion revisions to the first four steps, submission of preliminary findings, and/or completion of this iteration of data collection.

Comments specific to your plan:

Mission listed in Section 1 is contains an infinite set, really, but the learning goals are well bounded and specific in Step 2. The first learning goal—students will be aware of decision options that can improve their learning process, production, and/or products—is stated in a very measurable way. The second learning goal—students will be able to apply better decision making in/to their learning process—also seems very clear and targeted and potentially very measurable. We are a little confused when we get to the Methods section toward the bottom of your Step 4. Here, it appears that you are looking for three outcomes, and it seems like the second and third both come from your second learning goal, but their distinguishing features are not clear. We look forward to better understanding the data you gather for these.

Backing up to Step 2, we wonder whether your learning goals should include outcomes associated with quantitative skills. What about learning goals associated with the disability services? Should there be one or more learning goals associated with the writing center? (We suspect that there would be myriad examples online of how to assess a writing center.)

While we don’t want to see your assessment plan become so large that it is not feasible—please, please do keep it manageable!—it should probably be representative of the diversity of services offered. Perhaps fostering metacognitive awareness of learning needs is your overarching goal? If that is the case, then your learning goals may be perfectly well aligned to all facets of your work. Then just articulate how it subsumes/relates to all areas.

As people who are unfamiliar with your consultation/meeting reports, it is difficult to determine whether you are using direct, indirect[[\*]](https://docs.google.com/a/albion.edu/Doc?docid=0Af5-buQImItiZGNncDQ0cV82ZDJ3aG1raGY&hl=en" \l "_ftn1" \o "), or a combination of measures. We can imagine that you might have self-report surveys (indirect), notes from observations (may be direct or indirect, depending on what is being observed), and possibly grades (indirect). However, there well may be direct measures of which we are unaware.  Please be more explicit about the nature of the data you can and can and will collect.

Do you have the type of evidence that Barry Wolf presented, such as retention or grade point data? If his work falls within the scope of your work, you could certainly include this as assessment data.

We look forward to reading how the data collection and analysis has gone, and to learning how you have used the data!

[[\*]](https://docs.google.com/a/albion.edu/Doc?docid=0Af5-buQImItiZGNncDQ0cV82ZDJ3aG1raGY&hl=en" \l "_ftnref1" \o ") [\*] *In assessing student learning, there are direct and indirect sources of evidence. Direct evidence is clear and convincing information about student learning, such as: tests, examinations, papers, projects, assignments, field experience assessments, and portfolios. These are particularly strong sources of evidence especially when accompanied by articulated standards (such as a rubric). On the other hand, with indirect evidence there is room for other factors to affect the outcomes either positively or negatively. Examples of indirect evidence include: retention, graduation, and placement rates (may be impacted by economic conditions or college policies); surveys of students and alumni (may indicate feelings about college experience); grades (standards and even content may differ across instructors and institutions).*

**Next Steps:**

In coordination with your Assessment Committee reviewers and their written and verbal feedback, please observe the following deadlines for your assessment cycle:

* September 15: Revisions to Steps 1-4 due (if necessary)
* October 1: Completion of Steps 5 & 6 using preliminary data
* November 2: Final Fall 2009 plans due

**Fall 2009**

The **Academic Skills Center**'s assessment work this year helped them to find ways to more clearly articulate their mission and create a simple instrument for gauging the efficacy of their work as seen in student performance at the Skills Center. While this means they have not collected a lot of data, they have analyzed what they have so far, and they are continuing to improve their measurement while also improving their service. I believe they are to be congratulated for a successful final assessment report!