

## **2008-2009 REPORT ON THE ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING AT NEC**

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In the fall of 2002/ winter of 2003, NEC initiated a new process of assessing curricular and co-curricular components through outcomes-assessment. This initial work was based upon a paper and presentation titled Uses of the Assessment Record Book Portfolio and Other Mechanisms to Encourage Comprehensive Assessment of Student Learning, which was delivered at NEASC's 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting on December 2001 by Paul Cunningham and Christopher Beach. The work aimed to have faculty within each academic program at NEC map program outcomes, articulate assessments to measure student learning, create benchmarks for success, and eventually have each academic program measure itself against the benchmarks in their annual reports so as to provide specific overall assessments of the nature, quality and extent of student learning within the college. That said, as a result of making significant broader, more sweeping improvements within our academic programming at NEC, this work needed to be temporarily discontinued so we could focus on the broader goals associated with revising our Mission and our Strategic Plan.

Since all of our work at the college must result in better supporting our mission, when Senior Vice President of Enrollment Management Michele Perkins was named Interim President of NEC she organized a new Strategic Planning Committee, and that Committee under her leadership quickly made Initiative 1 of our Strategic Plan ("Define Our Identity and Declare Our Mission") its first priority, and as a result of wide community investment in fulfilling the initiative the college adopted a new Mission and new institutional Values by May of 2007. Clearly, due to the change in our Mission (which articulates our dedication to experiential learning) and the adoption of our new Values (which replaced our older institutional outcomes) a resulting priority was to assess our academic programs and initiate important improvements so as to better ensure that our programs were designed to support the Values and Mission of the college, and improve the learning opportunities for all our students. This re-prioritization made Initiative 2 "Creating a Climate of Excellence" our next focus, and it is within this broad initiative that we specifically stated our goal of creating a system for assessing, documenting, and eventually marketing the developmental progress and success of our students, with specific emphasize on our commitment to experiential learning and innovative pedagogies.

Thus, in an effort to fulfill Initiative 2, over the last years we have been deeply invested in significant review and planning of our academic programs, and as a result, significant review and planning regarding our assessment mechanisms for student learning. This planning, review, and interpretation of assessment results has been completed (depending on the type of assessments) by the appropriate/related people and groups, such as students, faculty, department heads, Collegium Chairs, and Division Deans, as well as by

higher administrative figures (The President, Vice Presidents) and broader institutional groups such as the General Education Committee, the Academic Standards Committee, the Curriculum Committee, the Registrar's Office, the Full Faculty (at governance meetings and retreats), the VPAA Council, the Graduate Council, the President's Council, the Strategic Planning Committee, the Enrollment Management Committee, as well as the Board of Trustees. And importantly, the results of ongoing assessments of our academic programs not only led to significant changes, but they led to changes based significantly upon our quest to fulfill our new Mission and Values. Thus, it was clearly the adoption of our Mission and Values (along with our continual assessment of student learning) that provided us with the guidance and context necessary to make the significant changes that culminated in the adoption of our new academic programs such as the undergraduate 4/4 curriculum, the revision of all undergraduate majors, minors and courses of study, the creation of an entirely new General Education Program, as well as the creation of an entirely new Honors Program. In fact, throughout all of the work developing our new curriculum it's been clear that NEC not only remains committed to a curriculum that will meet our Mission and Values, but that we are also committed to a strong foundation of institutional processes and curricular requirements that can be used to evaluate student learning and aid in our efforts to improve upon the academic success of our students.

The curricular expectations we hold on the institutional level allows us to assess academic performance according to an hierarchy of learning outcomes, the level of skills students demonstrate, as well as according to the types of learning experiences in which students are invested. For example, each academic program includes required and pre-required courses, and the existence of pre-requirements indicates the hierarchy of learning outcomes associated not only between undergraduate and graduate level programs, but within courses themselves, and that students must first master lower level learning outcomes in one course in order to progress to the next course which requires the mastery of more advanced learning outcomes. As well, students take a variety of course levels: 1000 level courses indicate introductory skill levels, 2000 and 3000 level courses indicate intermediate skill levels, 4000 level courses indicate advanced skills levels, and 5000 and 6000 level courses indicate graduate level skills. In other words, each of the course levels indicates an appropriate skill level that students need to demonstrate mastery of in order to progress to the next level. As well, the curriculum offers different types of learning environments that students can participate within such as traditional courses, internships, independent studies, and directed studies. These environments each have their own requirements and criteria regarding not only grade point average, but credits earned, and students are assessed according to those standards when they enroll in the courses themselves. Another institutional assessment process that is built directly into the curriculum and that's designed to improve student learning can be seen in one of our primary assessments of outcomes, which is the assessment of their grade point average (where student must earn

at least a 2.0 to show evidence of satisfactory academic progress each semester, as well as cumulatively). As part of this assessment we have build in additional processes which specifically aid those students who do not show evidence of satisfactory academic performance. Effectively, those students who don't meet minimum academic standards are either placed on academic probation or suspension by the Academic Standards Committee. As well, starting in the fall of 2007 those students who were on probation were also recommended (and in some cases mandated) to enroll in our PASS Program (our academic recovery program), where students are provided with one 30-minute appointment per week with a Professional Mentor where they are given assistance with time-management skills as well as connected to appropriate resources to help them academically. During the fall 2007 and spring 2008 semesters, 30 students participated in the program each semester and 28 (93.3%) were retained for the following semester. Additionally, in the fall of 2008 we initiated another step in the process, where Mentoring/Tutoring Groups have become part of the PASS program. Here those students mandated to the PASS program were also provided with the opportunity to attend weekly Mentoring/Tutoring Groups. Each group is comprised of 6 students and staffed by one Professional Tutor and one Professional Mentor. Assessments have shown that those students who chose to participate in the Mentoring/Tutoring Groups were more likely to earn satisfactory (S) grades at midterm than those who chose not to participate. Clearly, the assessment tools that are inherent to the curriculum itself are often focused on improving student learning.

That said, as a college we are committed to using a great variety of assessment tools on the institutional level, and many of the ways in which we assess student learning are not necessarily built directly into our curriculum. In fact, the sheer variety of institutional level assessment tools we use shows that we evaluate our students learning in many different ways and from many points of view in order to provide us with more thorough results. For example, some of the assessment tools we have recently used that have provided us with results that aided in our efforts at improving academic programming recently have included the following:

- 1) *NSSE and FSSE reports:* we have completed these in an effort to assess student satisfaction and academic success. The NSSE survey results specifically resulted in the creation of a sub-group of the President's Council being formed. This group, as well as the former Associate Dean of Faculty assessed data and presented a report on student satisfaction and success widely across the college, as well as to the Board of Trustees. Both the NSSE and FSSE surveys significantly aided in our efforts at gaining community member support for the development of more systematic student assessment mechanisms at the college
- 2) *Admissions Data, IPEDS Data, Retention Data, and Graduation Rates-* this information as well as other data collected by the Registrar's office is used on an ongoing basis in the Enrollment

Management Committee, The President's Council, as well as within the Board of Trustees. The data we collect has essential in our efforts to create our Optimal Enrollment Plan 3) *Midterm grades*- grades of "N" (Needs Improvement) or S (Satisfactory) are submitted by faculty for all students in all courses each semester. Those students with 2 or more "N" grades are contacted by Pathways staff and assistance is provided to them as needed in an effort to help them with their pursuit of academic success. As well, as a result of the midterm grades, those students needing to Withdraw from a course are encouraged to take a second seven-week course to ensure they keep up with earning the necessary number of credits per year

- 4) *Reporting of Attendance in all 1000 and 2000 Level Courses*- tracking attendance began in the fall of 2006. All faculty members during weeks two through six of each semester submit weekly attendance reports. This data is recorded and examined by the Associate Dean of Learning Services, Pathways Staff, the Director of Academic Advising, and the Registrar's Office in an effort to assess attendance trends and their impact upon student learning. Those students who are reported with two or more absences within a week are contacted by Pathways staff and provided with mentoring and assistance as needed. As a result of these assessments we have generally seen a decrease every week in the number of students we need to contact about absences. In turn we see a positive relationship between attending classes and academic performance
- 5) *Annual Collegium /Division Report*- these are written by the Chair/Dean of each Collegium/Division and are submitted to the VPAA in an effort to assess the performance of all majors/programs within each Collegium/Division
- 6) *Faculty/Course Evaluations*- evaluations are completed by students in every course, every semester. These course level evaluations ask students to evaluate the effectiveness of courses and faculty teaching. As part of this evaluation students assess if a variety of evaluation methods were used in grading. The collective data and results from these evaluations are used on a broader institutional level when they are reviewed by the VPAA and members of the Faculty Development Committee when faculty undergo annual and contractual and promotional review 7) *Revised Rubric on Teaching Effectiveness*- during the 2004/5 year, the Faculty Development Committee developed a series of rubrics which included a rubric for "Teaching Effectiveness" as part of the Faculty Evaluation System. This rubric encourages the use of multiple teaching methods as part of effective teaching principles, and as a result creates an expectation for faculty to use multiple assessments of student learning in the classroom
- 8) *Annual Faculty Activity Reports*- these reports are written by all full-time faculty members. Within these reports faculty are asked to report on any pedagogical innovations they have

brought into their classes. This is done in a specific effort to encourage faculty to use multiple methodologies in the classroom in order to allow each student to learn in the ways which are most effective for them. These reports are reviewed by Collegium Chairs, Division Deans, often the VPAA, and members of FDC (when faculty undergo the faculty evaluation process)

- 9) *Required Study Groups for Student Athletes*- our athletic coaches require study groups for our student athletes. We have measured the retention rates of student athletes and our student-athletes are retained at a higher rate than our non student-athletes
- 10) *Self Studies for Accreditation and State Certification*- as a college we are continually invested in some aspect of self-study for either State Certification or for Accreditation purposes and as a result are always in a self-reflective state invested in efforts to make improvements across all areas of the college
- 11) *Community Surveys*- over the last year a number of surveys related to student life, community life, faculty governance, as well as academic programming have been completed by students, staff, faculty and administrators via Survey-Monkey. Clearly, the more we build in the expectation of asking and using feedback from community members the better
- 12) *Graduate Survey and Alumni Interviews*- the Office of Career Services completes Graduate Surveys each year and analyzes the data regarding job placement percentages for students who have graduated from specific academic programs. As well, a renewed focus on gathering alumni interviews is allowing us to tell the story of who we are, where we've been, and where we are going
- 13) *Academic Support Data*- we have re-initiated student surveys in the Academic Support Center (Tutoring) and are in the process of transferring the Center's statistical data into Banner. The more information we are able to track and code, the more we will be able to make informed decisions regarding our support services and the level in which we are supporting our student's efforts towards academic success.

Beyond these specific institutional assessment tools the following highlights a number of the more significant institutional level initiatives that aided us in moving forward towards creating better systems and processes for assessing student learning: A) In November of 2006 the Dean of Faculty brought Education Consultant Dr. Pamela Clark to campus for a faculty workshop entitled "Assessment: Innovative Ways to link student Outcomes with Assessments." This workshop was well attended by faculty and contributed to the work faculty conducted when they revised their majors into the 4/4 curriculum B) Later in the 2006/7 year Dr. Clark was invited to campus again on several occasions and delivered workshops aiding faculty in our development of the General Education Program. Much of the content of these workshops related to broader assessment of student learning issues and aided faculty in

their initial development of new General Education courses C) In 2006/7 New England College invested significant effort in designing a formal grant application that respectfully requested \$274,000 from the Davis Educational Foundation to support a two-year educational initiative titled New England College: A 21st Century Curriculum. This initiative addressed three components for implementing a new educational curriculum: (1) Curriculum Revision, (2) Assessment Tools, and (3) Training. While this grant application was not granted, the effort at drafting this application raised faculty and administrative awareness of the need to design and better integrate assessment systems within our programming, as well as helped to shape our new curriculum. As well, this grant application has led to the current VPAA, the Associate Dean of Learning Services, the Director of Engaged Learning, and the Director of Development Operations working together continue efforts in developing new grant applications which now focus primarily on the Assessment of Student Learning and Engaged Learning.

As a result of these initiatives and in an effort to ensure that the assessment of student learning is a broad-based and systematic process throughout our community, in the fall of 2008 the current VPAA charged the Associate Dean of Learning Services to co-ordinate efforts across the college regarding the Assessment of Student Learning, and to work with constituents across the college in re-developing the outcomes-assessment work that was originally initiated in 2002/3. As a result of this charge NEC has now selected and declared our basic approach to the assessment of student learning to be based on outcomes-assessments. As well, and in response to that decision, the Associate Dean of Learning Services in consultation with the VPAA Council has modified and adapted the original 2002/3 outcomes-assessment documents to better fit the new Mission and Values of the college. As well, the Associate Dean of Learning Services has worked with Chairs, Deans, Program Directors and Faculty to ensure that all academic programs (Graduate Program, Undergraduate Majors, Non-Major Minors, General Education, Writing, Honors, Library, etc.) began work on a new outcomes-assessment matrix during the fall semester of 2008. The new outcomes-assessment matrix asks faculty within each academic program to complete the following steps: 1) become familiar and identify NEC's new Mission and Values, 2) determine and identify the academic program's learning outcomes (the learning outcomes a student who completes the program should be able to demonstrate), 3) integrate and align the program's learning outcomes with the college's Values, 4) integrate the college's Values within all courses (required and elective) in the program, and document the skill levels in meeting the outcomes (elementary skill level, intermediate skill level, and advanced skill level), 5) integrate the program learning outcomes with courses in the program and determine the emphasis in terms of skill levels in meeting the outcomes, 6) complete an shortened version of the NEASC E1a form; 7) list the assessment tools used in evaluating how well students meet specific learning objectives, and then identify which courses use the specific assessment tools, or if they are whole program assessments, and lastly 8) identify the assessment

benchmarks for specific assessment measures and identify possible curricular changes based upon the results.

While it should be evident that we have been invested in routine assessment of student learning on the institutional level through routine review of faculty/course evaluations, through ongoing departmental curricular reviews, through routine reviews of faculty Activity Reports, and through systematic review of faculty via contractual and promotional evaluation processes by the Faculty Development Committee and VPAA, our commitment to completing our new outcomes-assessment matrixes has also moved us forward significantly in better establishing a truly systematic assessment process that encompasses assessments on the institutional, program and course level and that will result in improvements in student learning. In reviewing the outcomes-assessment matrixes that were completed for December 2008, we have found that nearly all academic programs (undergraduate and graduate) have now completed the outcomes-assessment matrixes for the 2008-2009 academic year, and as a result we can definitely state that all of our academic programs have updated their outcomes to align with the new Mission Statement and Institutional Values. These revised outcomes will be listed on the website under each academic program's homepage and updated in the next edition of the Academic Catalogue. Additionally, we can state that nearly all of the undergraduate and graduate academic programs have also identified their assessment tools as well as identified benchmarks for those assessments. The few remaining programs that still need to complete steps 7 and 8 will have their outcomes-assessment matrixes completed in full by February 15, 2009.

As well, as a result of our preliminary evaluations of the outcomes-assessment matrixes it's clear that within individual programs, individual faculty define how they assess student learning differently, and in turn no one standard or mandated assessment mechanism will work for all situations. Indeed, the great variety of assessments tools within specific courses and the great number of ways in which faculty choose to assess student learning affirms that the NEC faculty finds tremendous value in assessing students using many different assessment tools. In other words, it seems clear that our faculty know our students learn in many different ways, and as a result we use many different assessment tools to evaluate student learning. In fact, if there appears to be one unifying factor regarding student assessment it's that NEC faculty pride themselves on teaching (and as a result, assessing) the individual student. It's this focus on the individual student that is at the heart of nearly all that we do.

In looking over the results of our outcomes-assessment matrixes we also see that some of the initial issues we experiences when first initiating the outcomes-assessment work back in 2002/3 have also been resolved. We now seem to have more consistency in terms of programs being able to clearly identify how their outcomes help to fulfill our new Mission and institutional Values. As well, within our programs specific skills now appear to be more appropriately aligned with specific and corresponding course levels,

and within graduate programs learning outcomes appear to be clearly built upon the outcomes of the undergraduate programs they are building off. And just as it appears that most programs have a good balance of direct and indirect evidence as well as quantitative and qualitative measures to demonstrate student learning, it's also clear that even in such early stages of analyzing our outcomes-assessment matrixes that trends do reveal themselves. For example, it appears that a significant number of undergraduate programs include some sort of advanced study as a concluding assessment, such as a Senior Thesis or Capstone course, or Portfolio System, or Senior Presentation in which both research and creativity are necessary to demonstrate problem-solving, and that directed and/or independent studies and/or practicum experiences, or student teaching, or internships are used in an effort to ensure that professional development is offered as one of the concluding aspects of the programs. In fact, the outcomes-assessment matrixes demonstrate that overall our curriculum is appropriate to the abilities and academic preparation of the students we admit to our programs. But even with that finding, there are a few areas in which we will be working to improve regarding the assessment of student learning, for there appears to be a number of programs that did not document much of their indirect assessments of student learning in their matrixes. It also appears as if the use of pre-assessments on the program level is limited. And lastly, it appears that very few programs use significant external assessment tools or external benchmarks (such as external reviewers of student exams or portfolios, or national exams) as a way to evaluate student academic success. This may be due to the fact that some faculty members find external assessments to be contradictory to elements of our Mission and institutional Values. Regardless of the particular reasons these initial results of our outcomes-assessment matrixes leave us room for further discussion.

In reviewing specific undergraduate programs the Education Department should be specifically mentioned since the Education programs are also accredited by the NH State Department of Education, and as a result must not only meet standards set out by NEASC, but also the standards of the NH State Department of Education. In relation to this, it's important to note that the NEC Education Department has continued to develop their processes of assessing student learning. In 2006 they were reviewed by the NH State Department of Education and more recently in 2007/8 they were invested in the redesign of the General Education Program. The Education Department's broader *initiatives* regarding the improvement of student learning is also evident by the following three highlights: 1) *The Assessment Grant*: The Education Department received a grant from the NH State Department of Education to work with content faculty in a variety of disciplines in order to identify outcomes, assessments and evidence during the 2006/7 academic year. During this time great strides were taken in educating our faculty regarding assessment tools, and the Education Department started to develop their portfolio system. 2) *The Development of the Online Portfolio System*: The Teacher Education Department developed and is now using the Personal

Learning Planner (PLP) as its online portfolio system that allows students to collect and align work to State teaching certification standards. Currently, all first year Education students take the “Teaching Portfolio” course where they are introduced to the PLP and the state standards, and Graduate students take Portfolio I. Students are asked to review the standards (General Education and Professional Education- which pertain to all areas of certification, and then their specific certification area standards) and explain what each standard means and why it is important to a teacher to know or be able to do. This is a new process for undergraduates, one that allows students to create portfolios at different stages of their academic program –when they apply to the major, when they are ready to student teach, and at the completion of student teaching. Graduate Portfolios are aligned to INTASC (Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium) standards and are reviewed at the conclusion of their program. Those graduate students seeking certification follow the same process as the undergraduates. Some undergraduate faculty use the PLP to provide students with feedback on their work. Those that do are then able to make adjustments to their courses and the curriculum. Other faculty members review the work in more traditional ways affording them with the same opportunity to make adjustments as necessary. 3) *Praxis scores Used as Benchmarks:* Praxis scores are routinely reviewed to determine acceptance into the Education program as well as eligibility for recommendation for State certification. Results from the Praxis I test assess writing, reading, and mathematics (elements of the General Education curriculum). The results from the Praxis II test assess content, as well as additional elements from the General Education program, particularly for those students seeking Elementary Education certification. The findings of the Praxis scores are used to enhance the program as needed, but again the process is relatively young. Recently the Education Department redesigned the application to the major process due to a review of Praxis scores.

Within the School of Graduate and Professional Studies (SGPS) the foremost assessment tool for student learning is the Capstone Project. It’s clear than faculty members from within a number of the Graduate and Professional Studies Programs are invested in using the Capstone Project in order to systematically improve upon programming as well as upon student learning. Graduate programs that currently use the Capstone include the Master of Science in Management Programs (with Specializations in Health Care Administration, Strategic Leadership, Marketing Management, Banking, Criminal Justice Leadership, and Real Estate), the Master of Arts in Public Policy, the Master of Science in Human Services, the Master of Science in Mental Health Counseling, and the B.S. in Health Care Administration. Within these programs the Capstone requirements do vary but many of the programs have created the Capstone project so that it is embedded within the program itself, and thus students end up working closely throughout their coursework with faculty advisors in an effort to complete the Capstone. In addition, while the format of the Capstone projects vary, most often a significant portion of the Capstone

is completed as part of a writing project, and to compliment that part of the project students also carry out an oral presentation to a faculty panel. An exception to this system is the online-only programs, where students carry out the Capstone project at the end of their program of study; in these programs the project is not divided across the different terms.

In terms of assessing the Capstone projects, students receive feedback from a faculty panel that reads their reports and attends their presentations. Students may pass the report with no revisions, or with minor/significant revisions required in the final report. In turn, the faculty panel and other faculty involved in the Capstone courses compare notes on a regular basis and share the materials they produce for their courses. As a result of this a “community of practice” of Capstone-related faculty has emerged and has produced improvements in the content and delivery of the Capstone. This has recently resulted in a more systematic review of the Capstone that started in the fall of 2008, when the Graduate Council created the Capstone Review Committee, comprised of the directors of all programs in the SGPS. This Committee has as its mandate to carry out a comprehensive review of the Capstone project across programs, and to propose changes to the Capstones that will promote continuous improvement. The Capstone Review Committee is currently revising the purpose, objectives, expected learning outcomes and structure/delivery of the Capstone. Among its tasks, the Committee is also designing a system of rubrics and evaluation of student success that the faculty will use to monitor progress and propose innovations.

It’s clear that NEC does a good job in the assessment of student learning on the institutional, program, and course levels, and is now committed to doing so for our new General Education Program as well. Starting in 2006, the General Education Program began its internal review by faculty teaching within the program, as well as the General Education Committee itself, and the full Faculty. This review not only took into consideration the NEASC and NH State Department of Education’s standards related to General Education, but the new Mission and Values of the college. In fact, during the process of creating the new General Education Program, faculty developed learning goals (outcomes) for each of the seven Liberal Arts Seminars, the two required Writing courses, the Math component, as well as the Information Literacy component that help to comprise the formal General Education Program of the college. As well, learning outcomes for the entire program were re-developed in the fall of 2008 in order to better express to both students and faculty the overarching goals of the whole program.

As part of the General Education Program, the curriculum includes a number of assessments that are inherently part of the expectations of the program. For example, all undergraduate students must complete the required General Education courses with passing grades in order to graduate, as well students must earn a minimum grade of C in each of the required Writing courses. These assessments are interpreted by the Registrar’s office (in the context of evaluating and preparing student transcripts). In addition, a Math

Placement Test is now required for all first year students during fall orientation which provides assessment that is interpreted by the Math faculty and as a result students are placed into the appropriate skill level Math courses. Alongside the Math Placement Test is a “Writing Sample” (twice piloted) which has thus far been used as an exercise in having content faculty become familiar with using a rubric to score writing, as well as a way for Writing faculty members to assess the writing skills and abilities of incoming students. Lastly, as part of the General Education Program we have initiated an Information Literacy Program which is provided by the Danforth Library and the Writing Program. Here students gain formal instruction in Information Literacy through both Library instruction and through instruction in the first-year Writing courses. Students then gain more Information Literacy practice throughout the sophomore and junior years through the Liberal Arts Seminars, and then again later in their junior or senior years they gain additional Information Competencies through research methods courses within the majors. Information literacy skills are assessed through a variety of methods including short and long term papers, bibliographies, portfolios, peer and self assessments, Capstone projects in research methods courses, and externally through the SAILS (Standardized Assessment of Information Literacy) Test which assesses students in five Information Literacy Competency standards for Higher Education as developed by and approved by ACRL and ALA. The SAILS standards are:

- 1) The information literate student determines the nature and extent of the information needed,
- 2) The information literate student selects the most appropriate methods or information retrieval systems for accessing the needed information,
- 3) The information literate student evaluates information and its sources critically and incorporates selected information into his or her knowledge base and value system,
- 4) The information literate student, individually or as a member of a group, uses information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose, and
- 5) The information literate student understands many of the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information and accesses and uses information ethically and legally.

The General Education Committee has also been investing time and effort into assessing the new program by holding two Liberal Arts Seminar dinners in which faculty who are teaching within the new LAS Seminars discuss their experiences teaching within the new program and offer suggestions for improvements. These discussions are simply the first steps in our development of more comprehensive assessments of the program, for the General Education Committee is also currently invested in the process of completing the outcomes-assessment matrix for the General Education Program as a whole, and as a part of this process, not only will they be documenting the ways in which individual faculty assess

individual courses within the General Education Program, but the General Education Committee will also be creating Assessment tools that focus on assessing the program as a whole.

Programs related to student academic support are also currently completing outcomes-assessment matrixes. The first to do so has been the Library (the Library's strategic goals actually include the goal to develop and implement assessment systems to be used for short and long range planning, evaluation of programs, and assessment of student learning outcomes in information literacy). Here the Director of the Library has worked with the Associate Dean of Learning Services to modify the structure of the outcomes-assessment matrixes in order to create a better structure for support services in which to provide their own assessment and benchmark information. Once this adjusted format is settled upon (also in cooperation with the Vice President of Enrollment Management), additional academic support services (such as the Academic Support Center, and Learning Services) will complete the matrixes and ongoing analysis of the matrixes will lead to overall assessments and improvements regarding student support services.

All in all, on the institutional level we need to continue to identify the specific types of assessments we want to utilize and continue to set specific benchmarks for those assessments, paying close attention that the information we collect is used to support our Mission, as well as aid in improving student learning. For example, with the VPAA appointing a director of Engaged Learning, consultation between the Assessment Steering Committee and the Director of Engaged Learning will be important so as to ensure that the Mission's priority of engaged learning is incorporated into expectations of student learning. In other words, we will need to develop further systems of collecting evidence of student learning that shows evidence of engaged learning activities. As well, we must make decisions regarding what type of information is important to collect and analyze: do we want to track the success of students being accepted into graduate schools? Or will we be looking more closely at the number of students going into more hands-on praxis, experiential, engaged learning opportunities such as Teach for America, the Peace Corps, or public service? Some of these may represent indicators of institutional effectiveness with respect to our Mission, and some may not. We need to decide which of these broad-based assessments needs routine tracking and analysis, and which do not. Additionally, support for the development of our college-wide assessment processes will need to be conveyed strongly to the Budgeting Committee and Board of Trustees, so as to ensure that as a results of student learning assessments we help indentify operational needs, staffing needs, curricular needs, as well as needs related to facilities.

The use of our new outcomes-assessment matrixes is part of a larger, more comprehensive, and more systematic process of assessing student learning at the college. The matrixes are intended to serve as department assessment tools, to assist faculty in reviewing courses, sequencing courses, reviewing curriculum and recommending appropriate changes. They allow faculty to thoughtfully reflect upon how

they design and update their curriculum to ensure that our Mission and Values are continually met and that our curriculum will be strengthened upon ongoing review. The assessment processes described here will also need to be further developed in the form of Assessment Reports, and those Assessment Reports will need to be integrated into our curricular and decision-making processes. The purpose of reporting on the assessment of student learning is to ensure that we reflect upon and provide relevant information regarding our academic programs and how they aid in our student's learning. By developing clear ways in which institutional, program and course level assessments results can be disseminated across the college and to specific programs in meaningful ways, it's our hope that we can use this information in a more systematic processes in order to create even more improvements within the academic programs, and other areas of the college. Thus, preliminarily we can identify the following as the next steps in our ongoing process of truly systematizing our student learning assessment processes: 1) Having ensured that all academic programs have completed their outcomes-assessment matrixes in the fall of 08, during the Spring of 09 the Associate Dean of Learning Services will ensure that all support services complete the outcomes-assessment matrixes 2) The Assessment Steering Committee that has been established by President Perkins will, over the course of the 2009 spring semester ensure that all matrixes (and all "Assessment Reports") as well as all assessment tools (rubrics, surveys, interview questions, description of portfolio questions etc) are stored electronically so that all faculty and administrators have access for review and updating 3) During the spring 2009 semester the Assessment Steering Committee will identify and engage those community members who have roles and responsibilities related to the assessment of student learning in order to establish a system of systematic oversight and clear processes regarding the assessment of student learning 3) Ongoing: through the Assessment Steering Committee and others who are connected to the Assessment of Student Learning (General Education, Curriculum Committee, VPAA Council, Enrollment Management, etc.) strengthen the criteria related to the assessment of student learning and ensure the dissemination of those assessment results are primarily and routinely used in an effort to improve student learning at NEC.