

Planning Council Report Educational Program and Its Effectiveness

Standard 2.B

Educational program planning is based on regular and continuous assessment of programs in light of the needs of the disciplines, the fields or occupations for which programs prepare students, and other constituencies of the institution.

2.B.1 The institution's processes for assessing its educational programs are clearly defined, encompass all of its offerings, are conducted on a regular basis, and are integrated into the overall planning and evaluation plan. These processes are consistent with the institution's assessment plan as required by Policy 2.2 Educational Assessment. While key constituents are involved in the process, the faculty have a central role in planning and evaluating the educational programs.

Policy 2.2 Educational Assessment

The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities expects each institution and program to adopt an assessment plan responsive to its mission and its needs. In so doing, the Commission urges the necessity of a continuing process of academic planning, the carrying out of those plans, the assessment of the outcomes, and the influencing of the planning process by the assessment activities.

As noted in Standard Two, implicit in the mission statement of every institution of higher education is the education of students. Consequently, each institution has an obligation to plan carefully its courses of instruction to respond to student needs, to evaluate the effectiveness of that educational program in terms of the change it brings about in students, and to make improvements in the program dictated by the evaluative process. Assessment of educational quality has always been at the heart of the accreditation process. In earlier times, this assessment tended to focus more upon process measures and structural features; hence, there was considerable emphasis placed upon resources available to enhance students' educational experiences such as the range and variety of graduate degrees held by members of the faculty, the number of books in the library, the quality of specialized laboratory equipment, and the like. More recently, while still stressing the need to assess the quantity and quality of the whole educational experience, the communities of interest served by the accreditation enterprise have come to appreciate the validity and usefulness of using output evaluations and assessment as well as input measures.

Nearly every institution accredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities engages in some type of outcomes assessment. Some are more formalized than others; some more quantified; some less so; some well-

developed and long-utilized, and some of more recent origin and implementation. The intent of Commission policy is to stress outcomes assessment as an essential part of the ongoing institutional self-study and accreditation processes, to underline the necessity for each institution to formulate a plan which provides for a series of outcomes measures that are internally consistent and in accord with its mission and structure, and, finally, to provide some examples of a variety of successful plans for assessing educational outcomes.

Central to the outcomes analyses or assessments are judgments about the effects of the educational program upon students. These judgments can be made in a variety of ways and can be based upon a variety of data sources. The more data sources that contribute to the overall judgment, the more reliable that judgment would seem to be. There follows a list of several outcomes measures which, when used in appropriate combinations and informed by the institutional mission, could yield an efficacious program of outcomes assessment. This list is intended to be illustrative and exemplary as opposed to prescriptive and exhaustive.

a. Student Information.

From what sources does the institution acquire its students? What percentage directly from high school? Community college transfers? Transfers from other institutions? What blend of gender, age group, and ethnicity has the institution attracted over time? Retained over time? Graduated over time? What is the mean measured aptitude, over time, of entering students? What are the local grade distribution trends? What changes have appeared over time?

b. Mid-Program Assessments.

If the institution has some kind of required writing course or an emphasis on writing across the curriculum, what evidence is there that students are better writers after having been exposed to the course or curriculum? How are these judgments rendered? If student writing improves, do students appear to retain this newly acquired proficiency? If so, why, and if not, why not? What changes are planned as a result of the assessment exercise?

A required course, program, or sequence in mathematics can be assessed in a similar fashion. What evidence is there that the skills improved or declined as a result of the program? How are these judgments rendered? Does the improvement appear permanent or transitory? How has the program been changed as a result of the assessment program?

A required course, program, or sequence in any subject matter can be addressed in a similar fashion, as can nearly any part of the program in general education or the program as a whole.

c. End of Program Assessment.

What percentage of those students who enter an institution graduate? Is the percentage increasing or decreasing? Why? What is the mean number of years in which students graduate? Is that mean increasing or decreasing? Why? What are the criteria for these judgments? What is the several year retention pattern from one class to the next, such as freshman to sophomore? If patterns reflect significant losses between one level and another, what are the reasons? Similar questions may be asked by gender and/or ethnic background. If the institution or program requires a capstone experience at the end of the curriculum, are present students performing better or worse than their predecessors? What are the reasons? What are the bases for the judgments? (e.g. "The cumulative judgment of the faculty is that the quality of the senior theses in art has improved during the past five years. This judgment is based upon the following evidence . . ." or "The Psychology Department requires the advanced test on the Graduate Record Examination of all graduates. These scores have declined by an average of 2% each year for the past five years. The faculty is of the opinion that the reasons for this decline are...")

d. Program Review and Specialized Accreditation.

Some institutions require periodic program review of each academic program, either through an institutionally approved internal process and/or through seeking and achieving specialized accreditation, or by utilizing external experts. Either or both of these activities can provide a wealth of outcomes assessment data, particularly if the methodology remains somewhat standardized over time.

e. Alumni Satisfaction and Loyalty.

A number of institutions engage in a variety of alumni surveys which elicit, over time, the judgments of alumni of the efficacy of their educational experience in a program or at an institution. Use of such a mechanism can assist an institution in understanding whether alumni satisfaction with various aspects of the educational program, particularly those facets which the institution stresses, appears to be growing or diminishing over time. If satisfaction is increasing, why? If decreasing, why? What are the bases for the judgments? What curricular implications do these findings have?

f. Dropouts/Non-completers.

What methods has the institution utilized to determine the reasons why students drop out or otherwise do not complete a program once they have enrolled in it? What is the attrition rate over the past five years? Is it increasing or decreasing? What are the reasons? What programs or efforts does the institution engage to enhance student retention? Which tactics have proved to be effective?

g. Employment and/or Employer Satisfaction Measures.

One relatively straightforward outcomes measure used by some institutions concerns that number and/or percentage of former students who have sought and found employment. Are they happy with what they have found? Do they think the program prepared them well for their chosen occupations? If trained in a particular area, teacher education, for example, have they found a teaching position?

Other institutions have found qualitative comments of frequent employers to be particularly helpful in assessing educational outcomes. Do the employers regularly recruit program graduates? Why or why not? How well do program graduates perform in comparison with graduates from other similar programs? Are there areas of the curriculum in which program graduates are particularly well prepared? Which areas? Why is preparation judged to be particularly good? Where are the weaknesses? Why? What is being done to provide remedial activity?

2.B.2 The institution identifies and publishes the expected learning outcomes for each of its degree and certificate programs. Through regular and systematic assessment, it demonstrates that students who complete their programs, no matter where or how they are offered, have achieved these outcomes.

2.B.3 The institution provides evidence that its assessment activities lead to the improvement of teaching and learning.

[Overview of Program Offerings at TMCC](#)

TMCC provides a wide variety of offerings to the community including associates degrees, certificates of achievement, classes, training, and workshops. For a list of these offerings, see [TMCC Certificates, Degrees, Classes, Training, and Workshops](#) in the course catalog, or at http://www.tmcc.edu/admissions/catalog/pdf/sections/degrees_certs_ar.pdf.

[Overview of Educational Program Assessments at TMCC](#)

At TMCC, assessment takes place at three distinct levels: the Institutional level, the Program/Departmental level, and the Course/Unit level. See the [Assessment Report, October 2002](#) at http://www.tmcc.edu/inst_research/assessment/AssessmentReport_October02.pdf. Educational program assessment primarily relates to the Program/Departmental and the Course/Unit levels. Therefore these levels and their respective assessment components are described and analyzed below.

The Program/Departmental level seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of instructional programs and services provided to TMCC students. There are five assessment components to this level:

- *Program Outcomes Assessment*
- *Program Review*
- *General Education Outcomes Assessment*
- *Matriculation Evaluation & Research*
- *Placement Test Local Validation.*

The Course/Unit level focuses on individual courses, their content, as well as their relevance to students' objectives and College goals. There are two formal assessment components to this level:

- *Course Outcomes Assessment*
- *Course Prerequisites*

Description of TMCC Program Outcomes Assessment Process

The first component of the assessment plan at the Program/Departmental level is Program Outcomes Assessment. This is the systematic gathering and use of information about student learning for the purposes of improvement of all TMCC programs. "Program" is defined as a sequence of courses leading to a degree. Programs are expected to make explicit expectations and engage in the systematic gathering of evidence on how well performance matches these expectations. Programs are encouraged to develop the assessment process in a way that is most responsive to the needs of their program. Any proposal for a new or revised program, degree, or certificate must be accompanied by an outcomes assessment plan to be reviewed by the Institutional Research and Assessment Office.

The review cycle is three years, however, on circumstances a program may be monitored more frequently. For the current reporting calendar see the [Program Outcomes Assessment Reporting Calendar \(updated 01/23/04\)](http://www.tmcc.edu/inst_research/Assessment/ProgramOutcomes/PlansReports/Reporting%20Calendar.pdf) at http://www.tmcc.edu/inst_research/Assessment/ProgramOutcomes/PlansReports/Reporting%20Calendar.pdf

The Outcomes Assessment process requires an Assessment Plan including:

- *Description of Program*
- *Program Mission*
- *Specific Program Goals (usually fewer than 6 specific goals)*
- *Expected Program Outcomes related to each goal*
- *Assessment measures and criteria to be used to evaluate each outcome*

See the [Program Outcomes Assessment Plan Template \(2001-2002\)](http://www.tmcc.edu/inst_research/Assessment/ProgramOutcomes/PlansReports/Plan_Format.pdf) at http://www.tmcc.edu/inst_research/Assessment/ProgramOutcomes/PlansReports/Plan_Format.pdf

Program Outcomes Assessment data are collected on an annual basis and stored by either the department or the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment. Based on

these data an Assessment Report is prepared. This report follows a very similar template to the Assessment Plan, but additionally requires:

- Results of the data collection and analysis pertaining to each assessment measure
- Actions to be taken to improve program or change monitoring

See the [Program Outcomes Assessment Report Template \(2001-2002\)](http://www.tmcc.edu/inst_research/Assessment/ProgramOutcomes/PlansReports/ReportFormat.pdf) at http://www.tmcc.edu/inst_research/Assessment/ProgramOutcomes/PlansReports/ReportFormat.pdf

The major participants in the Outcomes Assessment Process are:

- Individual programs and their directors
- Institutional Research and Assessment Office

Examples of TMCC Program Outcomes Assessments

There are plans and/or reports available for 33 TMCC programs. See Program Outcomes Assessment Plans and Reports at http://www.tmcc.edu/inst_research/Assessment/ProgramOutcomes/PlansReports/index.asp

Analysis of TMCC Program Outcomes Assessment Process

Strengths: The Assessment Plan and Report templates help make the process clear and concise. The assessments usually include quantifiable data and multiple assessment methods are used (both direct and indirect). The outcomes are expressed in terms of skills, knowledge, and/or changes in attitude that a program expects of students as a result of successful completion. Some assessments, such as the Nursing Report 2002-2003, include data on the length of time it takes for students to complete the program, percentage of graduates passing board exams, and alumni job placement data.

Example from the Assessment Report from the Nursing Program 2002-2003:

Goal	Program Outcomes	Assessment Measures and Criteria	Results of Data Collection and Analysis
Goal 2: Nursing graduates will be prepared for NCLEX-RN examination	90% of graduates will pass exam on the 1 st attempt	Collect results from NCLEX-RN	2003 - 94%
Goal 3: Graduates will be employed as registered nurses within six to nine months after graduation	90% of graduates will be employed as registered nurses within six to nine months after graduation	Collect results from Graduate Survey administered annual one year after graduation	2002 – 96.7% 2003 – 100%

***Weaknesses:** There is a Program Outcomes Assessment Reporting Calendar for Fall 2002, Fall 2003, and Fall 2004 listing which programs were to submit reports in each of those periods. This list does not include all programs and shows many reports as incomplete. It appears most of the programs that offer associates degrees are included in the calendar. However, some appear to be missing such as Anthropology, Environmental Science, and Law Enforcement. This may be attributable to how a “program” is defined. Some programs are following a regular schedule (reporting in 2002 and then again in 2004), but the schedule beyond 2004 is not available so it is difficult to assess the overall pattern follows a three-year cycle..*

The Program Outcomes Assessment reports are variable. Some programs can readily collect quantifiable data from board exams or certificate tests, while other programs have more difficulty finding quantifiable measures.

It is unclear how these plans and reports are evaluated by the Institutional Research and Assessment Office and how feedback is given to programs. The plans and reports are currently available on the web, but as part of the accreditation database, not within program-related sites. These plans, and therefore these learning outcomes, are not routinely available to program participants. There could be more faculty involvement in the process. The only faculty involved are those who are an integral part of the program.

Recommendations:

- 1. The schedule of reporting needs to be more clearly defined*
- 2. The term “program” needs to be explicitly defined and better understood throughout the institution*
- 3. Consider including a faculty-based evaluation process*

Description of TMCC Program Review Process

The second component of the assessment plan at the Program/ Departmental level is the Program, Degree and Discipline Review Process. The process and the schedule of programs/disciplines to be reviewed are described, in detail, in TMCC Program, Review, and Discipline Review 06/29/04 at <http://www.tmcc.edu/facultysenate/pdf/ProgramDisciplineReviewProcess.pdf>.

The review cycle is five years, however, depending on circumstances a program may be monitored more frequently. The guiding principle for the process is that “reviewing a program, as assessing a program, should be done for the real benefit of the program, its students and its audience.” The review process is characterized by the following: Study-Review and Validate-Recommend-Act.

The Program and Discipline Review process is divided into the following steps:

- Departmental review through a self-study committee*
- Community presentation and input through the Academic Standards Committee*
- Institutional review through the Program and Discipline Review Committee (PDRC) representing the institution*

- *Co-chairs of the PDRC review the committee's findings with the self-study chair*
- *Self-study committee may prepare a written response to the recommendations of the PDRC as an attachment to the original report.*
- *Approval by the appropriate Dean and inclusion in division's plan*
- *Approval by the Vice President for Academic Affairs to prioritize within the institutional-academic context*
- *Approval by College President for institution-wide context*
- *Submission to System office as part of compliance*

At each step recommendations are made that are accepted, rejected or modified at the next level.

The major participants in the review process are:

- *Self- study Committee*
- *Program and Discipline Review Committee (PDRC)*
- *The Academic Standards Committee*
- *Instructional Dean*
- *Vice President of Academic Affairs*
- *College President*

The Program and Discipline Review process itself is divided into the following components:

- *Description*
- *Demographics and enrollment*
- *Curriculum*
- *Student success*
- *Resources and development*

Those components serve as guidelines and a template for the final report. Each section of the report includes an area for recommendations along with a final conclusion at the end of the report. Various reporting forms have been developed to assist with data gathering and interim analysis before the final report is prepared.

Examples of TMCC Program Reviews

Need to reference examples of reviews. Dental Hygiene and Radiologic Technology were reviewed during the 2001-2002 academic year and those reviews should be made available.

Analysis of TMCC Program Review Process

Strengths: *The process is thorough and ensures input from different perspectives, and constituencies. The reviews are conducted on a regular basis, but the process allows for more frequent reviews if necessary. The roles and responsibilities of the participants are clearly set forth which lessens the confusion sometimes found in a review process. The process includes, where appropriate, outside expertise and at least one faculty*

member from outside the program or discipline being reviewed. As noted in Standard 2.B.1 it is clear that the faculty has a central role in the program review process.

The five major components of the Program Review Process are consistent with Standard 2 and Policy 2.2 Educational Assessment. Each of these components is briefly analyzed below.

Description: Among other things, the description of the program specifically requires a discussion of “the relationship of the program’s/discipline’s mission to the overall college mission.” Keeping a focus on the overall college mission is consistent with the expectation in Policy 2.2 that each institution adopt an assessment plan that is responsive to its mission and its needs.

Demographics and Enrollment: Consistent with Policy 2.2a Student Information this part of the review process requires demographic information to be gathered and analyzed.

Curriculum: This part of the review process does not evaluate the curriculum itself, but instead focuses on whether measures are taken to ensure the effectiveness of the program.

Student Success: This part of the process requires the participants to analyze student success within the program. Significantly, the process requires a variety of different measurements. Student success permeates all of Standard 2.B and Policy 2.2.

***Weaknesses:** The Assessment Plan, as described in the Assessment Report 2002, and Program, Degree, and Discipline Review are not tightly integrated. In particular, as noted in the chart below, the categories to be evaluated according to the Assessment Plan and the components of the Program Review do not correlate very closely.*

<i>Assessment Plan categories evaluated</i>	<i>Program Review components</i>
	<i>Description</i>
<i>Enrollment trends</i>	<i>Demographics and enrollment</i>
<i>Staffing trends</i>	<i>Curriculum</i>
<i>Physical facilities</i>	<i>Student success</i>
<i>Equipment</i>	<i>Resources and development</i>

The program review components were drafted after the more general statement set forth in the assessment plan. It is conceivable that the program review is a refinement and improvement upon the assessment plan but that is not addressed in the documentation.

Within the program review process the terms, “program”, “degree” and “discipline” are not defined or explained. From the context it appears that the words “program” and “discipline” are used interchangeably and that a degree or certificate is something offered by a program or discipline. The lack of definitions or explanations creates the possibility that some offerings will not be reviewed while others might be unnecessarily

reviewed multiple times. In addition, it makes it difficult to precisely identify what is subject to review by the process.

Recommendations:

- 1. Each component within each level of the assessment plan should be tightly integrated with the overall assessment plan.*
- 2. The terms “program”, “degree”, and “discipline” should be defined.*

Description of TMCC General Education Outcomes Assessment

The third component of the assessment plan at the Program/ Departmental level is the General Education Outcomes Assessment. All students receiving degrees at TMCC are required to complete a set of general education courses from ten general education areas: Communications, English, Diversity, Fine Arts, Human Relations, Science, Constitution, Humanities, Mathematics, and Social Science.

The college has recently focused a great deal of attention on General Education. Subcommittees from two Faculty Senate Standing Committees joined together to form a new committee charged with developing a General Education mission statement, goals, and abilities, as well as developing a coherent matrix of courses and a comprehensive schedule of assessment.

The major participants in the general education assessment process are:

- Joint subcommittee from Curriculum and Academic Standards standing committees called Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment (SLOA)*
- General Education Assessment Committee (or subcommittee?)*
- New SLOA/Gen. Ed Committee with representatives from across campus*
- Faculty Senate*
- Vice President of Academic Affairs*

Major accomplishments towards the goal of formalizing General Education Assessment:

- SLOA/Gen Ed. Committee members attended the AAC&U General Education and Assessment Conference*
- The Committee has developed the following items:*
 - General Education Mission Statement*
 - General Education Goals*
 - General Education Abilities that will form the basis for assessing general education*
 - General Education Assessment schedule*
- Held campus forums to present and collect feed back*

Copies of the documents developed by the SLOA/Gen Ed. Committee need to be made available. Alternatively, the powerpoint presentation made by the VP of Academic Affairs at the Town Hall meeting at the beginning of the semester and by the Dean of MSET at the first Division meeting of the year could be made available on the web (Division Gened Presentation 080904.ppt).

Assessment of TMCC General Education Outcomes Assessment

Strengths: *The development of this process has been done in an open way that considers the perspectives of many constituents. The mission statement, goals, abilities, and the schedule of evaluations are near to completion and have been accomplished in a timely manner.*

Weaknesses: *The process is still under development, so there are no actual assessments to evaluate.*

Recommendations:

- 1. The college should continue developing a matrix of general education courses defining which goals and abilities specific courses address.*
- 2. The college should continue collecting feedback from faculty across campus.*

Description of Matriculation Evaluation & Research

The fourth component of the assessment plan at the Program/ Departmental level is Matriculation Evaluation & Research. According to the overall assessment plan a new matriculation policy was implemented at TMCC in the Fall 2001. The new policy, referred to as an initiative in the assessment plan, is carried out through a program called QUEST, Quality Education Starts at TMCC. The program is an effort to expose first time students to a variety of student services to maximize the students' success.

The program is voluntary. Any first time student enrolled in 12 or more credits is encouraged to participate. Students are required to enroll in a math, English, and study skills course allowing an elective of their choice during the first semester.

At the time of the assessment plan report Quest was in its third semester. Enrollment increased from 99 students in Fall 2001 to 162 in Fall 2002. According to the assessment report follow-up research indicated that students Quest participants persisted at a higher rate than first year, degree seeking students who did not participate in the program. Studies regarding the Quest program are available under the heading "QUEST Program Data" at the following website.

http://www.tmcc.edu/inst_research/selfstudy/Standard3/index.as

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Analysis of Matriculation Evaluation and Research

Strengths: *This component of the overall campus assessment plan demonstrates a student-centered approach. The Quest program was developed to address the needs of first time college students and appears to be strong and effective.*

Weaknesses: *The matriculation evaluation and research program refers to a new matriculation policy but does not describe the policy or provide a reference to any information about the policy. Matriculation Evaluation and Research refers only to the Quest program. There appears to be a number of retention, graduation, persistence and*

graduate satisfaction surveys and studies (see http://www.tmcc.edu/inst_research/selfstudy/Standard3/index.asp) but it is unclear how, if at all, they relate to overall matriculation evaluation and research.

Recommendations:

- 1. The concept of “matriculation evaluation” should be clarified. Exactly what is being evaluated?*
- 2. If the idea is to study retention, graduation, persistence and graduate satisfaction then the data beyond quest should be included.*

Description of TMCC Placement Test Validation

The fifth component of the assessment plan at the Program/ Departmental level is Placement Test Validation. The local validation of the College’s placement test (ACCUPLACER) must occur on an ongoing basis. Validation research entails establishing a relationship between a criterion measure (e.g., final grades) and the placement test scores. Validation efforts are essential for ensuring that placement test scores possess an acceptable level of predictive validity and connection to TMCC’s curriculum.

Several validation studies have taken place that correlate the placement of students based on ACCUPLACER scores with their success in the course of placement and subsequent courses. These studies are also used to evaluate the effectiveness of individual courses (see Course Outcomes Assessment below) and they are conducted by faculty members in conjunction with the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment. One study examined the relationship between student success in Math 096 (Intermediate Algebra) and subsequent success in Math 120 (College Level Math), [see Effectiveness of Developmental Education \(Math\) at http://www.tmcc.edu/inst_research/selfstudy/Standard2/Math096Success3yrs.pdf](http://www.tmcc.edu/inst_research/selfstudy/Standard2/Math096Success3yrs.pdf). Another study examined the relationship between student success in English 090 (Basic Writing) and subsequent success in English 101 (College Composition), [see Effectiveness of Developmental Education \(English\) at http://www.tmcc.edu/inst_research/selfstudy/Standard2/Eng090Success3yrs.pdf](http://www.tmcc.edu/inst_research/selfstudy/Standard2/Eng090Success3yrs.pdf).

Analysis of TMCC Placement Test Validation

Strengths: *Focus is being given to the need for ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of the College’s placement test. Like the Matriculation component of the assessment plan, this component focuses on an issue that is relevant to many students at TMCC and shows the College’s commitment to serving students.*

Weaknesses: *The data presented do not appear to actually track student ACCUPLACER scores. Furthermore, the labels on the graphs presented in the Math and English studies cited above appear to be in error. I have initiated contact with the Math Department to investigate the source and analysis of these data, but did not have time to resolve the issue prior to this draft of the document.*

Recommendations:

- 1. This is an important component of educational assessment on campus, so these efforts should continue.*
- 2. The data collected for these assessments should match the goals of this assessment component and the data need to be verified for accuracy.*

Course and Unit Level Assessment

There are two main components of assessment on the course and unit level. First, is the Course Outcomes Assessment and second, Course Prerequisites. Each of these is described and analyzed below.

Description of TMCC Course Outcomes Assessment Process

This process focuses on individual course outcomes and their assessment. All faculty are encouraged to outline and assess individual course outcomes. The Master Course Outline required for every course must include course outcomes and a description of how those outcomes are to be assessed. Before any new or revised course is approved, the TMCC Curriculum Committee reviews the Master Course Outline to ensure assessment in individual courses.

Examples of Course Syllabi and Master Course Outlines should be made available.

On-going research conducted by faculty members in conjunction with the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment tracks student success in individual courses. Example studies have been conducted in Chemistry, Math, and comparing computer-based to traditional courses.

Assessment of TMCC Course Outcomes Assessment Process

Strengths: *Individual course outcomes assessment is an important component, because the “class” is the basic unit of the college educational experience. Most faculty continually evaluate the effectiveness of their courses in an informal way. A formal process is a valuable tool so that effectiveness data can be collected and compared across campus.*

Weaknesses: *There has been general confusion among faculty about this process. Part of the problem is the terminology. Many faculty are use to thinking about their course objectives and are not sure if and how course outcomes are different. In the past, specific course outcomes were chosen from a generic learner outcomes menu. The Vice President of Academic Affairs is working to have content specific learner outcomes for individual courses that are not General Education courses.*

From the April 30, 2004 minutes of the Curriculum Committee: “Dr. Laguerre explained that the standard "generic" learner outcomes used by many

submissions to the Curriculum Committee (communication, general intellectual abilities, social functioning, knowledge, attitudes and values, quantitative reasoning) are actually more appropriate for general education courses. He thinks that courses that are not classified as general education courses should have more specific outcomes that pertain to their core purpose. In addition, a course should only have a few realistic outcomes, and they should be accompanied by ways to measure them. Measurements can either be quantitative or qualitative, depending upon the course. The degree to which every student attains these outcomes may be more for degree courses and programs than certificate courses and programs. He also noted that assessment is really a process of improving what we really care about and not measuring what it easy. He explained that good practices in assessment include assessment that reflects the multidimensional aspect of learning, has clear purposes and goals, includes experiences during the process of learning, is ongoing, and can be used to guide the process of continuous improvement. The committee's representative to the Student Learner Outcomes and Assessment Committee is Angie Hernandez and, hopefully, she can help the committee become better versed in the area of learner outcomes and assessment. “

Recommendations:

- 1. Continue the efforts of the Vice President of Academic Affairs to inform faculty about the value of the process and how the process functions.*
- 2. Assist faculty in developing appropriate measurements.*

Description of TMCC Course Prerequisites Process

As stated in the Assessment Report, “[t]he primary goal of this assessment activity is to streamline the process of assigning, enforcing and tracking course prerequisites, as well as monitoring their effectiveness on an ongoing basis.”

The majority of course prerequisites are driven by the common course numbering system-wide initiative. Locally, TMCC monitors the effectiveness of prerequisites by tracking success of students enrolling in courses requiring prerequisites. According to the Assessment Report, a database of prerequisites has been compiled and a number of studies have been conducted, including classes in social sciences, accounting, and chemistry. Furthermore, a college-wide prerequisite survey was given to department chairs to identify important issues and prospective research needs.

Analysis of TMCC Course Prerequisites Process

Strengths: *Evaluating how well students with prerequisites perform compared to students without prerequisites is an important assessment. It is a form of mid-program evaluation because it shows whether or not a specified sequence of courses has the expected educational continuity.*

Weaknesses: *The assessment report notes that many vocational and occupational programs have external forces which drive their prerequisite policies which are monitored through the outcomes assessment process by individual program. However, for purposes of outcome assessments a program is defined as a sequence of courses leading to a degree. http://www.tmcc.edu/inst_research/assessment/. It is likely that many vocational and occupational programs do not lead to degrees. Monitoring prerequisites in such programs is probably not necessary, but we should not claim we are monitoring them.*

It is difficult to find examples of the cited prerequisite studies within the web database because they have so many different titles. I think many of them are available on the web, but are disparately organized. Therefore we have not analyzed the data and are unable to comment on the content of these studies.

Recommendations:

- 1. Organize prerequisite studies in the context of this document on assessment and make them easily accessible.*
- 2. Follow up with the Department Chair survey and continue collecting data to evaluate how well prerequisites prepare students.*

Overall Evaluation of Educational Program Assessment at TMCC

Strengths: *The overall plan requires assessment on a variety of levels, from a variety of perspectives, related to a wide range of offerings. The college has made great strides toward a comprehensive assessment of educational programs.*

There is a new position/program of Excellence in Teaching and Learning designed to offer professional development across campus. That effort will help facilitate a better understanding of outcomes and assessment and should be integrated into the overall assessment of educational programs.

Weaknesses: *The individual components of the assessment plan are not always well integrated with the overall assessment plan. There is a need for more communication between what is going on in classrooms and departments and what is happening in the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment.*

It appears that some TMCC offerings do not easily fit into the major assessment systems of Program Outcomes Assessment and Program Reviews. Although Disciplines appear to be on the schedule for Program Outcomes Assessment, it is confusing because many discipline offerings are not part of a program, as program is currently defined.

Many data components that are collected, such as student grades and retention data, do not appear to be explicitly integrated into this campus assessment scheme at the Program/Departmental and Course/Unit levels. The Institutional level assessments, which were not specifically described in this document, include campus-wide student follow-up research and climate surveys. Obviously that is the easiest level at which to

collect these data. Although partitioning out the data into the course, course-sequence, and department level is more difficult, much could be gained from these efforts.

Recommendations:

- 1. One source should be responsible for ensuring consistency of the individual components of the plan with the overall plan.*
- 2. Consider forming a Faculty Senate Committee to interface with this entire assessment program.*
- 3. Better define what a “program” is and be sure that all course offerings, no matter if they are part of a program or not, are included in this assessment scheme.*