Monitoring Report to the Middle States Commission on Higher Education

from

Bowie State University
14000 Jericho Park Road
Bowie, Maryland 20715

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October 1, 2012

Subject of the Monitoring Report:

“Providing evidence of the implementation of (1) an organized and sustainable assessment process, including direct measures, to improve institutional effectiveness, with evidence that assessment information is used in budgeting, planning, and the allocation of resources (Standard 7); (2) appropriate procedures and policies for the initiation, quality, and assessment of distance education offerings (Standard 13); and (3) an organized and sustainable process with adequate administrative support and faculty resources, to assess the achievement of expected learning outcomes in all programs, including general education, with evidence that assessment information is used to improve teaching and learning (Standards 12 and 14).”

Evaluation Team’s Visit: April 3-6, 2011

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Dr. William E. Kirwan, Chancellor
Introduction

Bowie State University (BSU) originated in 1865 as an outgrowth of the first school opened in Baltimore, Maryland by the Baltimore Association for the Moral and Educational Improvement of Colored People, which had a self-appointed mission to train teachers. The institution moved to its present location in Prince George’s County, Maryland in 1914. Over the past 147 years, BSU has transformed from a normal school to a college and to its present university status. In 1988, BSU became a constituent institution of the University System of Maryland (USM).

The 2012 mission statement of the University is as follows:

Bowie State University provides high-quality and affordable educational opportunities at the bachelor’s, master’s and doctoral levels for a diverse student population of Marylanders and the global community. Building on its legacy as the state’s oldest historically black institution, Bowie State is a regional comprehensive university with liberal arts educational programs designed to broaden the knowledge base and skill set of students across disciplines and to enable students to think critically, value diversity, become effective, socially responsible leaders, function competently in a highly technical world, and pursue graduate and professional study.

The University is committed to increasing the number of students who earn advanced degrees in all disciplines, with special focus on computer science, business, the health sciences, information technology, the natural sciences, education, and related inter-disciplines. Academic integrity, the common good, constituent needs, market demands, and emerging challenges serve as important bases in the University’s efforts to develop educational programs and improve student access to learning opportunities.

Bowie advances its mission by offering a variety of academic programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels. The University offers 20 undergraduate majors, 19 master’s degree programs, two doctoral programs, seven post-baccalaureate certificates and two certificates of advanced study.

BSU is the oldest historically black institution in Maryland. The University continues to honor its heritage of providing access to higher education for underrepresented populations by enrolling 5,608 students during the fall 2011 semester, of which 88% were African-Americans. Over 4,450 students enrolled as undergraduates, the overwhelming majority enrolling full-time. The graduate student population tends to be female and enrolls part-time. Ninety percent of all BSU students are Maryland residents. The student body is served by 400 full- and part-time faculty and 387 non-instructional personnel.

A Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) Evaluation Team came to Bowie in April 2011 for a decennial visit. Subsequent MSCHE action in June 2011 reaffirmed accreditation and requested a monitoring report to include:
Providing evidence of the implementation of (1) an organized and sustainable assessment process, including direct measures, to improve institutional effectiveness, with evidence that assessment information is used in budgeting, planning, and the allocation of resources (Standard 7); (2) appropriate procedures and policies for the initiation, quality, and assessment of distance education offerings (Standard 13); and (3) an organized and sustainable process with adequate administrative support and faculty resources, to assess the achievement of expected learning outcomes in all programs, including general education, with evidence that assessment information is used to improve teaching and learning (Standards 12 and 14).

The accomplishments detailed throughout the remainder of this report could not have been completed without the leadership of the Interim Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. Through budget reallocation and the use of grant funds, the Interim Provost put together a sustainable structure for assessment that includes the President and Cabinet, the University Student Learning Assessment Committee (USLAC), the General Education Committee (new), the Assistant Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness and the Office of Planning, Analysis and Accountability, the Assistant Vice President for Assessment (new), college-level assessment coordinators (new), and academic department-level assessment coordinators (new).

**Figure 1 – Framework for Sustainable Assessment**

The following report documents the progress the University has made over the past academic year to further efforts outlined in the 2011 self-study report, inclusive of systematic and sustainable institutional effectiveness and assessment processes as well as the framework for distance education offerings. The report is organized by standard and contains a brief summary of recommendations from the 2011 self-study and those of the evaluation team, along with a discussion of activities related to each standard. Supporting documentation for activities are included as exhibits with links embedded within the document.
Standard 7 – Institutional Assessment

Introduction

BSU’s Strategic Plan (Exhibit 1) serves as the road map to advance the University’s mission of providing quality education for all students. The University’s Strategic Plan goals align with the USM 2010-2020 Strategic Plan’s five strategic themes as well as the goals contained in the Maryland Higher Education Commission’s 2009 State Plan for Postsecondary Education.

The Strategic Plan includes the following six goals:

1. Provide high-quality and affordable academic programs and support services for all students;
2. Support growth by enhancing recruitment, access, and retention efforts university-wide;
3. Promote regional economic and workforce development;
4. Increase the University’s external funding;
5. Promote effective and efficient use of institutional resources;
6. Enhance the University’s image.

The Academic Plan, the Enrollment Management Plan, the Facilities Master Plan, and the Closing the Achievement Gap Plan further outline specific objectives that support the Strategic Plan goals. Annual divisional goals and objectives are also linked to these plans as well as the President’s annual goals.

Specific recommendations contained in the self-study included the following:

- Create an environment that further supports and fosters assessment;
- Develop standardized processes so that all University units can uniformly document and use assessment results to improve future performance and assure institutional renewal;
- Demonstrate a focused commitment to institutional assessment through frequent monitoring and updates on the implementation of the University’s planning documents.

The team evaluation report contained the recommendation that the University should further expand the current plan to include specific budgetary impact on detailed plan objectives.

Academic Year 2011 – 2012 Activities

At the beginning of the 2011-2012 academic year, the Office of Planning, Analysis, and Accountability (OPAA) developed an Institutional Effectiveness Framework (Exhibit 2), which guided the work of OPAA and various internal committees throughout the year. The framework identifies external and internal assessments that provide a basis for evaluating mission and strategic planning progress and identifies groups responsible for coordinating planning and institutional effectiveness assessment. It also contains implementation steps for the next three fiscal years, a communications strategy, and a set of strategic plan and core values indicators.
Specific implementation steps discussed in this section include: developing linkages between planning, budgeting, and assessment; administration of institution-wide indirect assessments; developing institutional effectiveness indicators; realigning faculty annual reports; developing year-end reports summarizing Cabinet goals and objectives, the Academic Plan, and the Enrollment Management Plan and communicating results of external and internal assessments to the campus community. Two strategies were carried forward to AY 2012-2013: developing a non-academic unit assessment plan and developing and implementing a non-academic unit assessment training program.

Other implementation steps are discussed in Standard 14. These include hiring an Assistant Vice President for Assessment (completed), developing an annual report template for academic program assessment (completed), developing an academic program review manual (completed) and evaluating assessment/planning software packages for campus-wide usage (completed).

**Linking Planning, Budgeting, and Assessment**

In addition to the specific Standard 7 recommendations, the evaluation team included a number of suggestions in the Standard 2 of its report including: linking long-range planning, assessment, and budgeting, developing objectives with measurable outcomes, and distributing assessment findings to enable informed decision making. Specific examples of institutional progress toward the recommendations are described below.

The first illustration of a linkage between planning, budgeting, and assessment is increasing student achievement. Several data analyses have supported several initiatives designed to increase undergraduate retention and progression. For example, a presentation was made during the summer 2011 Closing the Achievement Gap (CTG) committee retreat reporting that a quarter of the fall 2010 first-time freshman class ended the academic year with a GPA below 2.0 (Exhibit 3). The committee charged the Academic Advisement Center (AAC) with creating an intervention program to assist students by addressing issues that contributed to difficulties in academic performance. The AAC thereupon developed the Knowledge Enhancement through Educational Programs (KEEP) initiative. In the KEEP program, academic advisers work with students individually and in groups to further develop students academically and socially. KEEP students sign a commitment to meet bi-weekly with their academic advisors, participate in at least two enrichment workshops, study two hours outside of class for every hour scheduled in class, participate in tutorial services, register for no more than fourteen (14) semester hours and repeat failed courses. Fifty-five students from fall 2010 committed to the KEEP program for summer 2011. Of these students, 43 percent had GPAs above 2.0 at the end of their second academic year. Repeating failed courses, connecting to tutoring services, and consistent monitoring have been the most successful KEEP strategies (Exhibit 4).

Another example involved the hiring of retention coordinators. During AY 2011-2012, three of the four colleges hired retention coordinators. These positions were recommended by the CTG committee and college deans and were informed by programmatic retention and graduation reports indicating challenges in transition from Academic Advisement Center to departmental advising. The retention coordinators collaborate with the academic departments to promote retention activities, work with students experiencing academic difficulties, analyze data to identify areas for improvement, offer professional development training to faculty and staff,
teach freshman seminar sections, and work with the Academic Advisement Center to promote smooth transition to departmental advising. OPAA and the retention coordinators developed a set of data files and reports so that the retention coordinators could become familiar with their colleges’ student demographics and academic achievement levels, and could then track their achievement through the semester and through the year. The data are also used to support college-retention initiatives for AY 2012-2013.

A third example of the linkage between planning, budgeting, and assessment is the evaluation of new faculty hire requests submitted by the colleges for fiscal year 2013. Each college requested additional faculty as part of new program planning, increased student interest in the discipline, or specialized accreditation needs. Unfortunately, the requests exceeded funding availability. To supplement the justifications prepared by the colleges, OPAA prepared data for the interim provost that included departmental faculty workload, student credit hours, number of majors by level, and course enrollments by level. The combination of data and college justification assisted the provost in identifying areas of greatest need. Through reallocation of existing resources, the University made the commitment to hire the following faculty to support strategic goal 1 – quality academic programs (see Table 1).

Table 1: FY 2013 Budget Initiatives – New Faculty

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>College</th>
<th>Program/Department</th>
<th>Positions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supporting New Programs</td>
<td>Arts and Sciences</td>
<td>Visual Communications &amp; Digital Media Arts program</td>
<td>1 full-time faculty, 3 adjuncts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Sports Management</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 full-time faculty, 4 adjuncts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting Specialized</td>
<td>Business</td>
<td>Accounting, Finance &amp; Economics department</td>
<td>1 full-time faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accreditation</td>
<td>Management, Marketing &amp; Public Administration</td>
<td>2 full-time faculty</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Counseling Department</td>
<td></td>
<td>2 full-time faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrollment Demand</td>
<td>Professional Studies</td>
<td>Behavioral Science Department</td>
<td>3 full-time faculty</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finally, OPAA developed, during AY 2011-2012, a planning, budgeting, and assessment calendar, which USLAC and the interim provost reviewed (Exhibit 5). The calendar documents the timing of these processes as described in the self-study report. The budget implementation process for the next fiscal year culminates in April/May with submission of fiscal needs by divisions and units and discussion of the coming year’s objectives at the Cabinet retreat. The subsequent year objectives are supported through new funding (when available), reallocation, or external funds. OPAA and the interim provost began discussions about how to more effectively incorporate assessment findings into the budget and planning processes. They also discussed the possibility of moving the identification of budget potential priorities to October/November. The current timing of requests for budget priorities takes place before end-of-year assessment reporting, thus preventing full use of year-end findings. Additionally, the late identification of fiscal year objectives pushes objective planning into the next fiscal year, leaving less time for implementation and assessment.
Indirect Assessments

OPAA provided summary reports on two indirect institutional assessments during this academic year: National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and Noel Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI). Trends in student course evaluation, another indirect assessment, are included in Standard 12.

NSSE results (Exhibit 6) from the 2011 administration were shared with USLAC. Even though the NSSE response rate was less than the national average (11% vs. 27%), USLAC found that the results provided a good basis for discussion about the NSSE Benchmarks and faculty experiences in the classroom. The first NSSE benchmark – Level of Academic Challenge – includes sub-items linked to Bloom’s Taxonomy levels. The seniors who responded indicated below-average ratings of their coursework that focused on applying theories and synthesizing and organizing of ideas. USLAC agreed to review during AY 2012-2013 program goals and expected learning outcomes in the 2012 annual assessment report and to work with departments as necessary to adjust expected outcomes to appropriate levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy. The other benchmark that USLAC focused on was Active and Collaborative Learning (ACL). Bowie exceeds the national averages for both first-year students and seniors. Bowie also exceeds ACL sub-item scores for in-class presentations and in-class projects that led to discussions on course assessment techniques in these areas and ideas for future workshops.

SSI focuses on numerous aspects of the student experience and provides several summary satisfaction questions. The spring 2012 administration was the first time in over eight years that the University has administered a large scale (N=1,875 students, a 36% response rate) student satisfaction survey to both undergraduate and graduate students. The following are selected baseline findings from the SSI Report (Exhibit 7). Students report “good” satisfaction with items related to educational quality and related support systems such as academic advising, which is perceived as BSU’s greatest strength by students. Students are most satisfied with (in addition to instructional and advising quality) such areas as fairness of disciplinary procedures, library resources, tutoring services, and counseling services. In contrast, opportunities for improvement exist in administrative service areas. For instance, students are least satisfied with food selection in the dining halls, timeliness of financial aid packaging, billing policies, the level of personal attention from admissions staff, and availability of campus administrators.

Each question in the SSI was mapped to BSU’s core values (Exhibit 7 Benchmarks & Core Values bookmark). Aggregated satisfaction scales (1 to 7) were derived from these groups of questions. The average satisfaction levels centered between the neutral to somewhat-satisfied response range. Satisfaction was highest for the core values scale related to Excellence (4.94). Civility, reflecting those questions that address characteristics of interactions with campus personnel, was rated lowest (4.40). These data are included as institutional effectiveness indicators of our core values.

Findings from the SSI will be shared with faculty, enrollment management staff, academic advising, student affairs, USLAC, and GEC during AY 2012-2013. In addition, a report was prepared bringing together the common themes from all of these assessments. The Triangulating Student Satisfaction Levels across Multiple Instruments report (Exhibit 8) examined student perceptions of academic quality, co-curricular experiences, academic support systems, the
campus environment, and overall satisfaction levels across these assessments. Generally, BSU students rated instructional effectiveness and areas supporting instruction positively. However, students tend to view interactions with administrative personnel as less than satisfactory. The Triangulation report will also be shared with various audiences in fall 2012.

**Indicators of Institutional Effectiveness**

The Institutional Effectiveness Framework document contains the list of institutional effectiveness indicators linked to strategic plan goals and to the core values. These indicators utilize elements from external and internal assessment instruments. The University has collected and reported on a full multi-year cycle of internal indirect and direct assessment findings. Fifty-five (55) indicators have been mapped to the Strategic Plan goals. An additional 12 indicators demonstrate adherence to the University’s core values. Examples include: the number of professionally accredited programs, job preparation and graduate school preparation, tuition and fees as a percent of area median income, percent of students receiving financial aid, percent of students satisfied with various support services, retention and graduation rates, number of online courses, number of undergraduate degrees in STEM, nursing and teaching, alumni giving and external grant funding, classroom utilization, expenditures on instruction, fund balance goal attainment, and student, graduate, faculty and staff perceptions of the University. Trend data for each indicator (Exhibit 9) will be utilized in the 2012-2013 planning process.

**Year-End Reporting of Goals and Objectives**

The faculty evaluation process was identified by the evaluation team as in need of review to ensure consistency across academic departments. The Faculty Evaluation Committee discussed over the past two years the faculty evaluation form and a process for providing feedback on department chair and college dean performance. During the spring 2012 semester, OPAA, representing the Office of the Provost, in collaboration with the Faculty Evaluation Committee, finalized the revised annual faculty self-evaluation form (Exhibit 10). The form is consistent with the BSU Faculty Handbook Policy on Faculty Evaluation (Section 3.4) and includes items that assist faculty in preparing for their annual performance reviews. Information from the form also supports departmental annual reporting requirements and provides evidence of non-instructional faculty productivity. The annual evaluation form contains a listing of items that the Faculty Evaluation Committee suggests be maintained by faculty: a self-evaluation highlighting teaching, research and scholarship, and public service, as well as the two peer-evaluation forms in accordance with Section 3.4.2.3 of the Faculty Handbook. The form now includes a suggested professional development plan for the next academic year that supports faculty professional and intellectual growth with the intended benefit of increased learning in the classroom. The annual faculty evaluation form was approved by the Faculty Senate and used in AY 2011-2012 faculty evaluation.

OPAA and the Faculty Evaluation Committee also finalized an evaluation tool for department chairs and college deans. The online feedback form provides full-time faculty with an opportunity to rate department chair and dean performance in administration, governance, faculty and student affairs, communication, and management. The form also asks for overall satisfaction and provides opportunities to identify strengths and weaknesses. These instruments are consistent with policies on faculty evaluation contained in the Faculty Handbook (sections
3.4.2.5 and 3.4.2.6). Forty-one percent of full-time faculty completed a Department Chair Evaluation and 36 percent completed a Dean’s Evaluation. Seventy-one percent of faculty respondents rated department chairs as good, very good, or excellent (Exhibit 11). Almost three-quarters of the respondents (74%) rated deans in a positive manner (Exhibit 12).

OPAA and the Faculty Evaluation Committee will collect feedback on the faculty evaluation form and the department chair and dean feedback forms during the fall 2012 Faculty Institute. One improvement already identified is to gather department chair feedback earlier in the spring semester so that deans can use this information as part of the department chair election and appointment process.

A self-study recommendation was the frequent monitoring of planning documents. OPAA prepared AY 2011-2012 annual summaries for the Academic Plan (Exhibit 13), Enrollment Management Plan (Exhibit 14) and the Closing the Achievement Gap Plan (Exhibit 15). The Cabinet’s goals and objectives were also summarized and linked to the Strategic Plan (Exhibit 16). Most of the objectives scheduled for the past fiscal year have been accomplished without additional funds. These reports are available on the BSU Planning website and will be used during AY 2012-2013 planning process.

**Communicating External and Internal Indirect Assessment**

Goals of the University’s academic programs are available on the University’s website, in the undergraduate and graduate catalogs, and through Presidential communications.

Results of institutional-level assessments are available on the BSU Institutional Assessment website. These results are also shared with the Cabinet, USLAC, GEC, and enrollment management and student affairs staff. OPAA provides specialized reports on request.

Academic program assessment results are shared annually within the departments, with the college deans, and with USLAC. An academic assessment summary report is prepared annually by the AVP for Assessment and shared with the provost as well as the campus community during the August Faculty Institute. Results from an assessment of the general education program are shared with GEC, which consists of members from general education disciplines, the college deans, and the provost before being shared with the campus community. These summary reports will be available on the assessment website during AY 2012-2013.
Standard 13 – Related Educational Activities

Introduction

The University’s Academic Computing unit is responsible for collaborating with academic units to develop and support both fully online courses as well as hybrid courses in which 50% or more of the instruction and learning activities are carried out online. In addition to instructional design, Academic Computing assumes responsibility for the management and technical support for the University’s learning management system, provides faculty development, supports course redesign projects, and coordinates online learner support services.

The Academic Plan (Exhibit 17) provides the framework and expectations for distance education. It details incremental goals in the number of courses utilizing distance education technologies, the learner support services necessary to support instruction, the need for faculty development and program development. The University offered 124 online and hybrid duplicated courses during AY 2011-2012. Of these, 101 were at the undergraduate level and 23 at the graduate level. A very small percentage of BSU students are enrolled in both traditional and distance education courses and an even smaller percentage are fully online at this time. Targeted course development is occurring in the graduate Nursing and Management Information System programs so that the University may submit an MSCHE substantive change request to offer distance education programs in the next academic year.

Specific recommendations contained in the self-study supported the continued development of fully online and hybrid courses to match the needs of BSU students and to keep academic offerings competitive with other universities. The evaluation team report noted that distance education is in its infancy and acknowledged that overall responsibility for this task at the time of the visit was not clearly established. The team recommended that clear lines of authority be established for the direction of distance education programming. The team also wanted assurance that the development and approval of distance education courses and programs follow the same process as traditional face-to-face courses. The University was also reminded of MSCHE processes and guidelines regarding distance education.

Academic Year 2011 – 2012 Activities

Online Course Approvals and Online Policy

All new courses, regardless of instructional format are reviewed and approved by the BSU Curriculum Committee. The BSU Online Policy (Exhibit 18) further outlines the organization and policies related to new and previously approved courses offered through both face-to-face and distance education modalities.

At the time of the 2011 evaluation team visit, the BSU Online Policy was undergoing shared governance review with University Council. University Council approved the BSU Online Policy in spring 2011 semester. The Online Policy ensures that BSU’s online courses are developed using the best practices in online course design, development and delivery. This policy reflects guidance provided in several recognized plans and policies including, but not
limited to, the following: USM’s Online Learning Strategic Plan (2006); Code of Maryland Regulations COMAR 13B.02.01.21 – Instruction Delivered by Distance Education (2007); Quality Matters Program standards and Middle States Commission on Higher Education (2011).

According to the Online Policy, there are four phases to adding distance education modality to a new or previously existing course: planning, training, development, and peer review. Faculty interested in adding distance education modality must first complete the *Intent to Teach Online /Hybrid Course Proposal* form (Exhibit 19). The form requires department chair and dean signatures and outlines training requirements, goals and expectations and timelines for completion. After the form is received by Academic Computing, then participating faculty have to complete a 12-module training program that can be completed one-on-one with an instructional designer or by attending the Learning Online, Teaching with Technology Online (LOTTO) Institute (see below for further detail). One semester is usually the time-frame for course development. A peer review process using the Quality Matters rubric (Exhibit 20) is the final step in the process. The peer review team consists of a subject matter expert, an internal faculty member and the instructional designer. The peer review team evaluates the content using the eight Quality Matters standards: course overview and introduction, learning objectives (competencies), assessment and measurement, instructional materials, learner interaction and engagement, course technology, learner support and accessibility. The peer review team either approves the course or makes recommendations for improvements. Those courses needing improvements are then re-evaluated after changes have been made.

As part of the process of implementing the BSU Online Policy, a complete review of all online and hybrid courses was conducted during AY 2011-2012. Academic Computing staff conducted a preliminary review of these courses against an abridged Quality Matters rubric to provide feedback to faculty regarding the current state of their courses. During the review process, 106 courses were evaluated. Courses were ranked into three classifications:

- **Tier A** – 22 courses met most criteria and could be fully compliant in a short amount of time;
- **Tier B** – 40 courses missed one or more important components and the instructor needed additional training to fill in gaps;
- **Tier C** – 44 courses needed significant development or a complete redesign; the instructor must take comprehensive training.

Faculty members were provided with feedback highlighting areas in their course design that do not meet the standards of the rubric. Faculty members were given the opportunity to make revisions to their courses to bring them into compliance with the rubric’s requirements. Faculty whose courses required such revisions made those necessary adjustments during summer 2012, and their courses were examined before the fall 2012 semester. According to an analysis prepared by the Office of Academic Computing, nine of the online/hybrid courses running in fall 2012 remained in Tier C at the beginning of the semester (Exhibit 21). Academic Computing provides real-time course design interventions so that students receive an instructional experience which meets policy expectations.
Monitoring Distance Education

The evaluation team noted that clearly defined lines of authority for the direction of the distance education program needed to be established. As a result, the Academic Computing unit responsible for distance education activities was reorganized and moved from reporting to the Division of Information Technology to reporting to the Division of Academic Affairs. All of their activities are now managed and directed by the Office of the Provost. The Academic Computing unit is staffed by a director and instructional technologist, both of whom serve as instructional designers and are supervised by the Special Assistant to the Provost and Director of Course Redesign. In addition, the BSU Strategic Plan for Online Education (Exhibit 22) was drafted during AY 2011-2012. This plan outlines the mission and vision of the online education programming, goals and objectives related thereto and the organization, management, and administrative strategies to be further implemented over the next two years.

Administrative and Support Services for Distance Education

One of the challenges addressed during the past academic year was to accurately identify online and hybrid courses in the schedule of classes. Prior to last year, departments were using the “notes” area to identify distance education courses. The Office of the Registrar developed a process for identifying and coding online and hybrid course sections, using the section number field. Course sections numbered between 500 and 550 are used for fully online course sections, and courses between 600 and 650 are hybrid course sections. The section coding scheme had partial success during the past academic year. OPAA worked with the registrar, academic computing, and the academic departments to also identify instructional modes (e.g., in-person, online, hybrid) as a supplemental process to the section numbering convention in the fall 2012 schedule.

Distance education support is also being enhanced through the BSU college readiness course. The Academic Advisement Center restructured the required Freshmen Seminar course (FRSE 101) during AY 2011-2012 with implementation beginning fall 2012. The restructured curriculum offers students an early introduction to distance education. All sections of FRSE 101 will place course syllabi, assignments, student grade books, and supplemental materials in Blackboard Learn. A specific module was developed to educate students regarding the expectations and requirements of taking an online course. For returning students and faculty, virtual, self-paced online training is available for navigating Blackboard Learn, and additional face-to-face workshops are available for faculty.

The BSU Online Policy requires online instructors to obtain both online pedagogy and technical training. Training is provided in many formats, including workshops and one-on-one sessions, in both online and face-to-face formats. These training sessions focus on several key areas, including, but not limited to, the following: basic/advanced instructional technology tools, content management, assessment, interaction/communication and Quality Matters. Training opportunities are posted on the University website and through the fall and spring faculty institutes.

Approximately one-third of the AY 2011-12 Faculty Institute workshops were related to online pedagogy (Exhibit 23). More than 150 faculty attended sessions during the various opportunities
offered. Instructional technology was a primary focus as the University was preparing to migrate from the Angel LMS to Blackboard Learn.

To further support faculty, the University provided a number of resources including training, online-videos, online documentation and tutorials, walk-in support clinics and help desk services. Since 2010, the LOTTO Institute has provided a comprehensive program to faculty participants for one-week during the summer. This program offers technical and pedagogical training for online/hybrid course development in a collegial environment with guest speakers, peer mentors, and personalized support (Exhibit 24). Twenty (20) faculty members participated in the 2012 LOTTO institute, with 13 completing all modules. Satisfaction with the training program was very high (Exhibit 25).

The University Testing Center (UTS) expanded its services to provide support for conducting face-to-face examinations for online courses. BSU purchased lockdown browser software, which restricts student access to external resources during computer-based assessments in the testing center. Faculty members are responsible for developing and posting midterm and final exams in the learning management system. UTS manages exam scheduling and exam proctoring according to testing center professional standards. Over the past two academic years, the number of midterm and final exams has tripled, from approximately 400 in fall 2010 to 1200 during the spring 2012 semester. The draft BSU Strategic Plan for Online Education discusses the need to expand testing center capabilities and the resources needed to prepare for the growth of the University’s distance education program over the next two years.

OPAA, in conjunction with the Faculty Evaluation Committee, piloted a student course evaluation process for fully online courses during fall 2011 with full implementation in spring 2012. Student course evaluation results are a component of the annual evaluation of faculty as well as a component of promotion and tenure portfolios. The Faculty Evaluation Committee chose to use the same instrument that is used for face-to-face courses. The Committee will reconsider the instrument after two semesters of full implementation. OPAA created course level surveys in both Angel and Blackboard Learn to accommodate those courses transitioning early to Blackboard. OPAA created online surveys for 65 online course sections and sent invitations to students. The course participation rate was 74 percent. Of those students responding, 84 percent were satisfied with the course. A full summary of online course evaluations is available (Exhibit 26). During the spring 2012 administration, some challenges arose. Technical difficulties prevented a number of sections from completing the survey. In addition, some online sections violated protocol by administering paper course evaluations during the face-to-face final exam. OPAA revised its process for fall 2012 so that online courses do not receive actual paper packets.

BSU has several mechanisms currently in place to support learning for online courses as well as face-to-face courses. Online instructors utilize synchronous conferencing tools that allow them to have real-time interactions with their online students via their computers from remote locations.

Smarthinking online tutoring services have been provided to all students on campus for the last two years. During the fall 2011 semester, 1,744 tutoring sessions occurred, totaling 1,132
tutoring hours. Approximately 91% of the tutoring sessions took place in the Online Writing Lab, a cross-curricular service, and 8% of the sessions were Live Sessions for non-writing content support. The subject area with the highest usage was Calculus Single Variable (4%). Writing support continued to be the most popular tutoring support with 84% of usage going to the Essay Center.

There were 1,566 tutoring sessions for a total of 1,043 tutoring hours during the spring 2012 semester. Approximately 81% of the tutoring sessions took place in the Online Writing Lab and 15% of the sessions were Live Sessions for non-writing content support. Subject areas with the highest usage included Calculus Single Variable (7%) and Physics (7%). Writing support continued to be the most popular tutoring support with 75% of usage going to the Essay Center.

In addition there are tutoring centers located on campus for those students who desire face-to-face support. The BSU Tutoring Center offers both individual and group tutoring sessions in the following content areas: biology, chemistry, computer technology, English, French, mathematics, physics, physical sciences, and Spanish. The Transitional Math Lab supports students in developmental mathematics. The College-Level Math Lab serves as a supplementary tutoring center for college-level math. The Smith Vidal Literacy and Language Center has three core components and facilities: writing, reading, and modern languages. Its instructors address the writing, reading, and language concerns of its students by responding to the papers of students and directing students to the appropriate resources for assistance. An assessment of the tutoring centers was completed in June 2011. Recommendations focused on coordination across centers, professional development for tutors, planning and fiscal support for expanded hours, availability in the summer and winter terms, and facility improvements. A tutoring center coordinator was hired at the end of FY 2012 to oversee these activities.

BSU is currently developing a process to assess the effectiveness of distance education course offerings. As part of the USM Course Redesign Initiative, BSU’s participating faculty are examining their grade distributions and comparing them to their face-to-face offerings. Of the five redesigned courses, within course student retention increased as well as overall course pass rates. A summary of course redesign initiatives is provided as an attachment to this report. (Exhibit 27)

**Linking Distance Education Planning to Budgeting and Resource Allocation**

The draft Strategic Plan for Online Education outlines the requirement to link distance education planning to budgeting and resource (re)allocation. Currently, due to the recent reorganization of Academic Computing under the Division of Academic Affairs, all budget and resource requirements are addressed directly by the Office of the Provost. This includes, but is not limited to, restructuring the allocation of resources to maintain licensing fees for software and hosting services to support distance education. The draft strategic plan details fiscal considerations as well as resources and staff requirements as Academic Affairs works to evolve and further solidify BSU’s presence in online education.

In June 2010, BSU completed its migration to ANGEL for its learning management system (LMS). However, Blackboard, Inc. (Bb) purchased ANGEL and announced that end of life for the software would occur in 2014. The University considered two options: Migrating back to Bb
Bowie State University

9.1 for 2012/2013 or researching alternatives to both Bb 9.1 and ANGEL for implementation no later than 2013/2014. After surveying the faculty and meeting with University Council, it was determined that Blackboard was the best choice. More than 95% of the faculty supported the decision.

Bb provides compatibility with critical tools currently licensed to support communication (Collaborate/Connect), student tutoring (Smarthinking), secure testing environments (Respondus Lockdown Browser), and retention (Starfish). Publisher integrations from McGraw-Hill, Wiley, Cengage, CafeScribe, and Barnes & Noble are also well integrated with the LMS. Content management, e-portfolios, community engagement, customized branding and mobile access were also important as well as timely migration of course materials and faculty training. An assessment system was also available to add on at a later date. The University decided to contract Blackboard Managed Hosting to provide a reliable technical solution for distance education with 24/7 support, disaster recovery, maintenance, upgrades and security. This was a critical and strategic decision to ensure continuous access to the platform.

The migration began in fall 2011, with configuration and training followed by a small-scale pilot with 30 courses during the spring 2012 semester. A broader rollout of the LMS began during summer 2012, with 300 courses, and a complete transition for fall 2012.

**Alignment to Nine Hallmarks of Quality**

BSU has aligned its distance education strategy and policies with the Nine Hallmarks of Quality defined by MSCHE, and the University continues to evolve to address all tenets of the hallmarks. The BSU Strategic Plan for Online Education outlines the mission and vision of the online education program within the context and vision of the University’s overall mission and goals (Hallmark 1). However, because no online programs currently exist, BSU is still in the process of laying the foundation necessary within some of the institution’s administrative areas as described in this report. The President has clearly identified the short-term goals for establishing BSU’s first online programs (Hallmark 2), and progress is taking place in the budgetary, technology, and resource planning necessary to support these programs.

The University’s online curriculum is developed based on its traditional course curriculum (Hallmarks 3 and 4) and undergoes the same internal and external evaluation and approval processes required for traditional programs. The assessment of the effectiveness of the online courses and student learning outcomes are conducted through student course evaluations (Hallmark 5) and will continue to expand as the university adopts a new assessment system in fall 2012. BSU faculty members delivering online instruction are well supported through the University’s training program for online education provided by Academic Computing (Hallmark 6). Both students and faculty are provided with help-desk support, online help and training resources (Hallmark 7). They are reminded of the requirement to uphold academic integrity in this new course delivery medium (Hallmark 9). The BSU Online Policy and the freshman seminar course inform and instruct the faculty and students, respectively, on that topic. Specific evidence of BSU’s progress in applying these hallmarks of quality is provided in Exhibit 28.
Standard 12 – General Education

Introduction

The University’s General Education Program (GEP) has the following five competencies:

1. Written and oral communication;
2. Scientific and quantitative reasoning;
3. Critical analysis and reasoning;
4. Technological competency;
5. Information literacy.

To fulfill GEP requirements, undergraduate students have a choice of 69 courses from which to select 31 or 32 core general education credits, 9 free electives, and 6 credits of institutional requirements, which consist of Freshman Seminar and Health and Wellness. At the time of the self-study report, the monitoring of GEP was the responsibility of the General Education Review and Advisory Committee (GERAB).

Each general education competency has at least three expected learning outcomes (Exhibit 29). Prior to AY 2011–2012, assessment of the GEP consisted primarily of student course evaluations, the English Proficiency Exam, and departmental assessment programs.

External review of the GEP occurs every three years in the MHEC-required Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report (SLOAR). SLOAR provides an overview of the institution’s assessment activities. The second part of the report documents adherence with Maryland regulations and MSCHE standards for each general education competency. The following are required elements for each general education competency: the institution’s definition of the competency level at which the competency is measured (institutional, program, course); the assessment approach(es), including direct and indirect measures; assessment results and improvements. The BSU General Education Review and Advisory Board (GERAB) and the University Student Learning Assessment Committee (USLAC) reviewed the report and recommended action items to the Provost and Assistant Vice President for Assessment.

Both the self-study and the evaluation team recognized the need to further develop a systematic and sustainable process to directly assess GEP competencies. The evaluation team report went further by adding that the results must be used for improvement.

Academic Year 2011 – 2012 Activities

The GERAB endorsed three objectives for AY 2011-2012, including the following:

1. Converting GERAB to the General Education Committee (GEC), which would be a standing committee of the Faculty Senate;
2. Pilot testing multi-section common-graded assignments in two General Education competency areas in 2011-2012;
3. Developing a process for assessing information literacy in FRSE 101, in conjunction with the Academic Advisement Center and the Thurgood Marshall Library.

These objectives are in addition to monitoring course evaluation data and English Proficiency Exam results.

Converting GERAB to a Standing Committee of the Faculty Senate

The Provost made a formal request of the Faculty Senate in October 2011 to establish the General Education Committee (GEC) as a standing committee. The request recognized the past work of GERAB in the restructuring of GEP. However, the Provost also recognized that much work needed to be done in GEP assessment. The suggested charge for the GEC was “developing and implementing a systematic and sustainable process for assessment of general education course outcomes and making recommendations to ensure continuous improvement of the general education program.”

The Faculty Senate reviewed and approved this request at its February 2012 meeting. The GEC will begin its work under the new structure in the AY 2012-2013 year.

Pilot Testing Multi-Section Written and Oral Communication and Critical Thinking Assessment in College of Business

As part of the institutional effort to structure the assessment of all general education competencies, an initial pilot study was conducted in the College of Business (COB) from fall 2011 to spring 2012. Within the COB, the Assurance of Learning (AOL) Committee established the following acceptable performance levels for three student learning goals: written communication (70%), oral communication (70%), and critical thinking skills (70%).

The written communication rubric was administered to 182 students using various written assignments across multiple sections of introductory business courses. The largest number of students participating was enrolled in MGMT 101 (n=73). The criteria for evaluation included: paragraph development, mechanical errors, vocabulary, sentence structure, range of material, original thought, coherent argument, and illustrations. Of the 182 students, 84% performed at an acceptable or exemplary level and 16% performed at an unacceptable level or below the benchmark of 70%.

The oral communication rubric was administered to 159 students using various oral presentations across multiple sections of introductory business courses. The largest number of students participating was enrolled in MGMT 101 (n=83). The criteria for evaluation included: enunciation, voice projection, inflection, pace, voice quality, eye contact, and body language. Of the 159 students, 91% performed at an acceptable or exemplary level and 9% performed at an unacceptable level or below the standard of 70%.

Similarly, the critical thinking rubric was administered to 166 students using various exercises and projects across multiple sections of introductory business courses. Again, the majority of
students participating were enrolled in MGMT 101. The criteria for evaluation included: application of relevant criteria, disposition and reflection, reasons for conclusions, new information seeking initiative, and use of appropriate reasoning to evaluate problems and make decisions. Of the 166 students, 69% performed at the mastering or arriving skill level and 31% performed at an emerging or developing skill level or below the benchmark of 70%. Exhibit 30 contains the full evaluation from the College of Business.

Improvement strategies for both oral and written communication are consistent, constructive, timely faculty feedback to students on communication assignments. Additionally, students who perform below average on the first assignment will be required to go to the writing center or to use Smarthinking on-line tutoring for assistance with future writing assignments and provide evidence of the use of these academic support services.

Specific instructional strategies will be implemented to raise performance levels on critical thinking. Two additional exercises and/or projects will be added to the courses to initially measure critical thinking skills. Faculty are also encouraged to provide additional feedback to students to reinforce student’s problem solving, decision making skills, as well as strategic and critical thinking skills.

Furthermore, the systematic assessment of GEP competencies in the COB is slated to continue through fall 2014 under the current assessment plan. The GEP assessment efforts are a model for other colleges to replicate with minor modifications if necessary to meet specific academic needs. Moreover, the General Education Committee plans to review the assessment process and the results to make recommendations for the best plan of action to assess the GEP competencies in other colleges.

Revising Objective: Planning the Assessment of All GEP Competencies for AY 2012-2013

The third AY 2011-2012 objective of the General Education Committee was reviewed by the AVP for Assessment during the spring 2012 semester. After the review, both the AVP for Assessment and the GEC determined that entering student and senior student general education assessment needed to happen across all general education competencies and not just information literacy.

The spring GEP planning for AY 2011-2012 was refocused to assess all competencies among most freshmen through Freshman Seminar (FRSE 101) and among a random selection of seniors. Grant resources were reallocated to support the standardized testing of all five general education competencies in fall 2012. Two nationally-normed ETS instruments, iSkills and Proficiency Profile, were selected and purchased in order to measure all GEP competencies within freshman and senior cohorts. This is the initial phase in developing a systematic and sustainable process to assess GEP competencies directly using external instruments. These two instruments closely align with the expected GEP learning outcomes.

The iSkills assessment measures both information literacy and critical thinking skills. One hundred (100) freshman students were tested in September 2012, which will provide BSU with baseline data for national and state comparisons. The iSkills assessment is part of the FRSE 101
Bowie State University

(Freshmen Seminar) common syllabus and will be conducted every fall semester. The iSkills assessment measures a student’s ability to think critically in a digital environment, navigate, understand and evaluate a variety of information through digital technology, and demonstrate information literacy and digital fluency (www.ets.org/iskills).

Every spring semester, 100 graduating seniors will be tested. This will provide longitudinal data for information literacy and critical thinking skills by student cohorts. All freshman and senior students who meet the proficiency standard for the iSkills assessment are given a certificate from ETS to add to their educational portfolio.

The external assessment of written communication, critical analysis skills and scientific and quantitative reasoning will be conducted using the ETS nationally-normed Proficiency Profile instrument. One hundred (100) freshman students will be tested the first week of October 2012, which will provide BSU with baseline data for national and state comparisons. The Proficiency Profile test is part of the FRSE 101 common syllabus and will be conducted every fall semester.

The Proficiency Profile assesses four core skill areas: critical thinking, reading, writing, and mathematics as a gauge of general education outcomes. Each spring semester, 100 graduating seniors will be given the Proficiency Profile exam, which will provide longitudinal data for written communication, critical analysis skills, and scientific and quantitative reasoning by student cohorts. Table 2 below summarizes the multi-year assessment approach utilizing these two instruments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Instrument</th>
<th>Schedule</th>
<th>Testing Cohort</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ETS iSkills</td>
<td>Fall 2012</td>
<td>Fall 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ETS iSkills</td>
<td>Spring 2013</td>
<td>Spring 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ETS Proficiency Profile</td>
<td>Fall 2012</td>
<td>Fall 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ETS Proficiency Profile</td>
<td>Spring 2013</td>
<td>Spring 2014</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The FRSE 101 seminar course was redesigned in spring 2012 to provide a consistent and uniform class experience for all entering freshmen. The FRSE 101 course is designed to prepare students for college-level study and familiarize them with the higher education environment. The course improvements include the following:

1. A revised common syllabus required for use in all course sections (completed).
2. Blackboard (Bb) use required in all sections so that students become familiar with the BSU on-line learning platform and become better prepared for opportunities in distance education. Specific tools required are syllabi, course assignments, journal, discussion groups, and grade book. Blackboard training was required for all FRSE instructors (completed July 23, 2012).
3. Library card registration and early activation for new students completed during summer student orientation (completed August 2012).
4. Required virtual tour of library and corresponding scavenger hunt as well as physical tour of library to reinforce understanding of library functions.
5. Baseline assessment of all general education competencies for freshmen scheduled during the fall semester using iSkills and Proficiency Profile.

The internal assessment of information literacy and technological competency is currently being conducted in conjunction with the Academic Advisement Center and the Thurgood Marshall Library through the FRSE 101 interactive learning module, LibGuides, designed specifically to measure the five standards for information literacy as approved by the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL). The five ACRL standards state that students should identify what information is needed, know how to access the information, evaluate the information, utilize the information, and incorporate the information ethically/legally.

After students complete the library virtual tour and LibGuide assignment on Bb, the results will be automatically recorded into the Bb grade book where they will be accessed and analyzed by faculty and librarians. Based on the results, improvements or changes can be recommended for the next academic year.

In summary, the test results, both short-term and long-term, will provide invaluable data regarding student proficiency in general education courses. More importantly, the structured assessment of all general education competencies using nationally-normed, external instruments for freshman and senior cohorts has solidified a systematic and sustainable process to guide practice and make improvements to academic programs that offer general education courses.

**Continuing GEP Assessment Practices – Syllabus Evaluation, Course Evaluations and English Proficiency Exam and MHEC SLOAR Report**

**Oral Communications Syllabi Evaluation**

During the spring 2012 semester, oral communication courses were reviewed by the AVP for Assessment in conjunction with the department chairperson and assessment coordinator. Per the assessment practice developed by GERAB, the course syllabi for COMM 101, Oral Communications, and COMM 103, Public Speaking, were collected and examined for oral communication competencies.

A review of the COMM 101 and COMM 103 syllabi revealed inconsistencies among the multiple sections, including undefined student learning outcomes, different required textbooks, and varying course assignments. Because the two courses are taught predominantly by adjunct instructors, a common syllabus had not been established. Throughout the spring 2012 semester, the department chair and AVP for Assessment developed a structure to improve the uniformity of the general education courses, which included a required common syllabus for all instructors, established student learning outcomes, required textbooks, common assignments, and a pretest/posttest administration in all sections to measure oral communication skills (Exhibit 31).
Based upon this structure, the communications department implemented the following policy changes in order to have consistent and well-defined course outcomes across all sections of COMM 101 and COMM 103 in AY 2012-2013. First, a common syllabus is now required to be used by all adjunct instructors. Second, all instructors are required to utilize Blackboard as an instructional tool in their courses and, to support this expectation, the communications department sponsored a mandatory Blackboard training day in August. Third, three common grading rubrics are used in both courses for oral communication assignments and for group presentation assignments.

In addition, COMM 101 and COMM 103 instructors must administer a standard pretest/posttest to assess student learning in oral communication. Results from the pretest/posttest as well as the oral communication rubrics are collected through Bb and are analyzed at the end of each semester. Finally, a new common required textbook, packaged with MyCOMMLab software, is a mandatory course component. The software provides online resources for faculty and students, with selected items downloaded to Blackboard. The course revisions and policy changes provide a structured framework to assess student learning each semester as well as a systematic and sustainable process to assess oral communication competencies directly over time.

Course Evaluations

The GERAB continued to assess the GEP indirectly through student course evaluations. Specific course evaluation questions related to enhancing student writing, reading, speaking, critical thinking, comprehension, and information literacy skills are tracked over time. The general education course evaluation trend data in Table 3 indicate that, in these semesters, of those students expressing a view, the majority reported that their general education courses improved their written and oral communication, computer technology, and information literacy skills. Over time, students also report slightly increased levels of improvement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Activities</th>
<th>Fall 2008</th>
<th>Spring 2009</th>
<th>Fall 2009</th>
<th>Fall 2010</th>
<th>Spring 2011</th>
<th>Fall 2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writing Skills</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral Presentation Skills</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Technology Skills</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library Research Skills*</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: This item measures information literacy skills. Source: Course evaluation data matched to general education courses
English Proficiency Exam

The English Proficiency Exam is a direct measure of student writing skills. As an institutional requirement for graduation, students are instructed to take the exam upon completion of English 102, the second of the required English courses. As shown in Table 4, since the spring 2010 semester, over 92 percent of those taking the EPE passed.

Table 4: Trends in EPE Pass Rates Fall 2008 – Spring 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fall 2008</th>
<th>Spring 2009</th>
<th>Fall 2009</th>
<th>Spring 2010</th>
<th>Fall 2010</th>
<th>Spring 2011</th>
<th>Fall 2012</th>
<th>Spring 2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N taking EPE</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>475</td>
<td>466</td>
<td>433</td>
<td>501</td>
<td>431</td>
<td>438</td>
<td>443</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Passing</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: PS term grade files

MHEC Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report (SLOAR)

In 2011, the University submitted the SLOAR report to MHEC (Exhibit 32). The report was based on the analysis compiled for the Middle States self-study report. Supporting assessment data included course evaluation data, EPE pass rates, and embedded course assessments. BSU formally committed to MHEC that the University would have a multilayered general education program assessment approach fully implemented in two academic years. In this approach, GEP assessment is envisioned to be carried out through national, institutional, and course-level assessments. The proposed and existing assessment strategies are outlined in Figure 2. MHEC staff accepted Bowie’s report in its summary presentation of SLOAR finding to the full Commission in April 2012.

Figure 2 - General Education Program Assessment Strategies
**Standard 14 – Assessment of Student Learning**

**Introduction**

The responsibility of direct assessment resides with academic departments. Direct assessment activities are supported by the University Student Learning Assessment Committee (USLAC) and the AVP for Assessment. OPAA, in conjunction with USLAC and the AVP for Assessment, provides analysis of indirect measures of student satisfaction with learning from the following instruments: student course evaluation, National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), Noel Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI), graduating student survey and graduate follow-up survey, and course grade distributions. The indirect survey measures are discussed earlier in Standard 7.

The self-study report documented student learning assessment challenges over time stemming in part from a lack of sustained effort and appropriate assessment-focused academic leadership. Beginning in 2009 a number of revitalization efforts have taken place to create a sustained focus on assessment including assessment related training through the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, the creation of USLAC (fall 2009), the hiring of a contractual Director of Assessment (fall 2009), and the development and reporting of assessment findings in a consistent format (summer 2010). The self-study recommended creating an AVP position for assessment as well as continuing to foster the culture of assessment through USLAC. These recommendations were supported by the evaluation team. The evaluation team also offered additional suggestions, which included monitoring the quality of assessment between accredited and non-accredited programs and increasing faculty professional development activities that focused on using assessment findings to inform curriculum decisions, teaching, and learning.

**Academic Year 2011 – 2012 Activities**

The USLAC endorsed five objectives for AY 2011-2012 in conjunction with OPAA: participate in the search process for an AVP for Assessment (completed); review, revise, and approve the annual assessment report form (completed); work with OPAA to develop a program review manual (completed); provide assessment-related workshops (ongoing), and aid in the transition of responsibility for student learning assessment activities from OPAA to AVP for Assessment (completed). The AVP for Assessment coordinated the collection and review of the annual programmatic assessment reports and the USM program review documents. These objectives align with the University’s academic plan and the self-study report and evaluation team recommendations.

**Administrative Support for Sustainable Assessment**

As described in the introduction, the University has made significant progress in establishing administrative support for assessment as evidenced by the hiring of the AVP for Assessment and a College of Education Assessment Coordinator. Both the College of Arts and Sciences and the College of Business have assessment coordinator searches currently underway.
Additionally, based upon the recommendation of the Middle States evaluation team, the USLAC unanimously recommended to the Provost that a one-course release per semester be provided to one person in each academic department to act as assessment coordinator. This coordinator would be charged with coordination of all assessment planning and reporting for his or her department and would be responsible for writing and submitting the annual assessment report on behalf of the department. Course release for assessment was implemented in spring 2012 (Exhibit 33).

USLAC also participated in the advisory group for assessment technology which met during the spring 2012 semester to explore the possible options for a campus-wide assessment system. The primary reason for reviewing various assessment systems was threefold: to support systematic and sustainable assessment processes; to support consistent data collection and storage for assessment findings, and to create cost efficiencies by discontinuing two assessment software packages that were being used by two of the colleges, thereby consolidating resources and support services. To evaluate software packages, the advisory group developed a rating rubric. The rubric included: technical compatibility, assessment and institutional effectiveness capabilities, and installation, training, and support issues. After reviewing three products, the advisory committee recommended to the Provost the purchase of Blackboard Outcomes. Year-end funds were used to purchase and install the software before June 30, 2012. Bowie State’s fall 2012 course and student data have been loaded into Outcomes. Initial on-site consulting in September 2012 focused on the Colleges of Business and Education. Selected departments will be invited to receive training in spring 2013.

**Setting Assessment Expectations – Standardized Annual Reports and USM Program Reviews**

**Annual Assessment Reports**
Direct assessment of student learning occurs within the academic departments and is reported annually by departmental assessment coordinators using the BSU Assessment Report template. The annual Assessment Reports are evaluated by USLAC and the AVP for Assessment. An annual summary report is shared with the campus community.

The annual assessment report structure was fully implemented during the academic year with 100% of the academic programs (43) submitting reports. The annual report template was developed by the USLAC in the fall semester and provided to assessment coordinators on March 1, 2012. Draft assessment reports were submitted to the AVP for Assessment on April 2, 2012. Feedback and direction were provided via a rating rubric by the AVP as well as written recommendations during each meeting with the assessment coordinators (Exhibit 34). Final revised reports were submitted in May 2012, and additional feedback was provided as appropriate. The AY 2011-2012 Annual Assessment Reports are contained in Exhibit 35.

Based on the rating rubric, results were calculated by the AVP for Assessment for each academic program and at the college level (see Table 5). Interpretations of the findings, a summary of the overall results, and recommendations are outlined below.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Program</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Program Goal</th>
<th>Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Multiple Measures</th>
<th>Data Collection</th>
<th>Data Analysis</th>
<th>Results</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>College of Arts and Sciences</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biology, General</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bioinformatics</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications Media</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Science</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Technology</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>78%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fine Arts</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17%</td>
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<tr>
<td>History &amp; Government</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>67%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science Education</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theater Arts</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Comm &amp; Digital Media</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>78%</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>61%</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
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Bowie State University
The satisfactory level of performance for program and college level assessment practice was set at 75% based on the annual assessment report rubric that examined the following components: program goals, student learning outcomes, multiple assessment measures, data collection, data analysis, and recommendations based on results.

Twenty-seven (63%) of the 43 academic programs are at a satisfactory level of performance and 16 (37%) academic programs are below the standard level. Of the 22 undergraduate programs, 13 (60%) are at a satisfactory level and nine (40%) are below. Furthermore, 14 (67%) of the 21 graduate programs are at a satisfactory level and seven (33%) are below the satisfactory level of 75%. Nearly 25% of the 43 academic programs assessment reports were rated at 100%; however, it is important to note that all 10 programs are accredited ones.

An analysis of the results by college showed that the College of Business (COB) earned the highest overall rating of 85% with four programs (UG=1; GRAD=3). The undergraduate program in business administration has an outstanding assessment practice (100%). The three graduate programs were all rated above 75%. All four programs are accredited by their respective accrediting bodies.

The College of Education (COE) received the second highest overall rating of 80% with 14 programs (UG=3; GRAD=11). Two of the undergraduate programs, Early Childhood Education and Elementary Education, have outstanding assessment practices (100%). Seven of the 11 graduate programs were highly rated with six of them at 100%. The majority of academic programs in COE are accredited.

Within the College of Professional Studies (CPS), one program, Psychology, scored 100% for its assessment efforts, and the CPS earned an overall rating of 75% with eight academic programs (UG=6; GRAD=2).

The College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) houses the most academic programs in any college and earned an overall rating of 62% with 17 academic programs (UG=12; GRAD=5). The highest rated programs in CAS were communications media (89%) and computer science (89%). Six (50%) of the 12 undergraduate programs were satisfactory; three (60%) of the five graduate programs scored above 75%.

Some examples of assessment results guiding practice in undergraduate programs in each college are highlighted below:

“At the beginning of the process, it was quickly determined that students in all tracks were taking courses out of sequence, which was determined to be detrimental to the student learning process. As a result, the department revamped its advising process to better ensure that students are taking courses in the correct sequence. Also, the department lacks capstone courses, which is currently being evaluated by the departmental curriculum committee. Other results are being analyzed to determine what curricular changes need to occur. However, the department will move forward with the creation of a standardized rubric that can be used (with some modifications) in all communication courses for all written, creative, and oral presentations.” Communications Media
“The intervention strategies have resulted in revised syllabi and activities throughout the business curriculum that emphasize those learning outcomes as well as include more exercises with feedback.” Business Administration

“A Professional Disposition Policy has been developed and is being implemented to track how teacher candidates identify and conduct themselves as members of the early childhood profession.” Early Childhood Education

“The program is currently changing and identifying additional assessment instruments to reflect the changes in the Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards of the Council on Social Work Education. The faculty recently completed identifying additional assessment tools to measure the program’s student learning outcomes for the core curriculum courses taught in the fall semester.” Social Work

“Overall, assessment results indicate a need for increasing course activities/assignments that would focus on and develop more insightful critical thinking and writing skills specific to the discipline, particularly in reflective writing. Thus a new foundational course, which will be writing intensive for the lower division, is in development and expected to be implemented in fall 2013. In addition to writing, the course will introduce majors to the concept of theatrical theory and criticism, including performance theory. Additionally, five courses (three performance and two academic) will add an “artistic theory and praxis” component to the course objectives and expected student learning outcomes. The faculty will develop a reflective writing rubric for use in all reflective writing activities, as well as a rubric for critical review of productions.” Theatre Arts

A summary analysis of the BSU academic programs indicated that most academic programs have satisfactory program goals, appropriate student learning outcomes, and multiple assessment measures within courses and programs. Data analysis was the weakest performance area across all four colleges. It is important to note that significant progress has been made in assessment practices across all academic programs over the past two years; however, recommendations for future assessment practices are to focus on more direct data collection, data analysis, and interpretation of results to inform practice and to improve student learning outcomes within specific academic programs. The availability of Blackboard Outcomes to all academic programs will facilitate data collection and analysis in the future.

The initial focus of the AVP for Assessment for the fall semester is to meet with all assessment coordinators in the CAS whose programs scored less than 75%. Within one academic year, the goal is to improve all academic programs that offer general education courses (math, science, and fine arts) to a satisfactory level of 75%. In addition, for the next academic year, the AVP for Assessment will assist each college in the efforts outlined below.

- Program goals must be included in two of the COB graduate programs.
- Significant emphasis should be placed on improving assessment practices within the non-accredited COE programs in order to have all programs operating at a satisfactory level.
A review of the sociology program goals and student learning outcomes will be essential in establishing effective assessment practices. Sociology was rated the lowest (44%) in CPS and should be a priority for the department assessment coordinator.

The math and biology programs in the CAS do not have assessment systems in place. It is imperative that these two programs have assessment structures in place that can improve student learning not only in general education courses but also in major courses. Furthermore, the fine arts program must develop common programmatic goals that apply to all concentrations within the program.

Overall, faculty release time improved the practice of targeted, meaningful, and useful assessments of student learning outcomes. Therefore, the continued practice of one course release per academic semester for departmental assessment coordinators (ACs) is recommended.

Likewise, the faculty members who served as ACs, as well as actively participated in the USLAC, produced the highest quality reports. The USLAC will discuss, in its September meeting, the importance of having departmental ACs also serve as their departments’ USLAC representatives. This approach would ensure that these faculty members will continue to develop the best practices in student learning assessment and to apply them to departmental assessment plans and reports.

**Academic Program Review**

Academic programs are reviewed on a seven-year cycle in accordance with USM program review policies. USM policy suggests that institutions establish program review guidelines to expand upon the USM requirements. The BSU program review manual was last updated over 10 years ago. USLAC and OPAA worked together to explore other USM institution program review processes as well as review these processes in other four-year institutions. The resulting 2012 Program Review Manual contains guiding principles, outcomes, timelines and responsibilities, external review standards, and a reporting template. This document describes a comprehensive process that examines administrative and curricular components, including learning outcomes. This manual was approved by USLAC in May 2012 for use in AY 2012-13 program reviews (*Exhibit 36*).

Responsibility for coordinating program reviews internally for USM now resides with the AVP for Assessment. In May 2012, 12 academic programs, predominantly from the College of Education, submitted academic program review reports. The specific academic programs and their corresponding degrees are listed in Table 6.
The academic reviews in the College of Education were submitted in May after the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) visit in spring 2012. All of the education programs were able to use the NCATE review to satisfy the external review component of the report. At the end of the spring 2012 visit, the NCATE team recommended approval for the College of Education and all of its corresponding academic programs for an additional seven years, with no conditions.

Although the College of Education met NCATE standards with no revisions, several themes emerged from the internal reviews conducted as part of the USM academic program review process. The following recommendations were noted particularly, with programs that have additional specialized program accreditation standards (SPAs):

- Stronger alignments are required with program assessment guidelines and rubrics to ensure useful application of analyzed data within the TaskStream System.

- Assessment reports must be generated each semester so that analysis of program standards embedded into TaskStream can be analyzed to inform program improvements.

- The assessment of students' professional dispositions must/should be conducted at the end of each course so that the data can be used in the advancement to candidacy process and will also alert program faculty about candidates who appear to be displaying poor dispositions and may be in need of consultation.

- Comprehensive exams must be aligned with program standards to adequately measure the knowledge and skills of the curriculum.

The completed AY 2011-2012 program reviews are provided in Exhibit 37.
Faculty Development

A critical component of building a culture of assessment is the availability of professional development opportunities for faculty. A number of ongoing and new activities to support assessment were offered this year through the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL).

To begin the fall and spring semesters, CETL offered a two-day Faculty Development Institute, which included the following topics:

- Course redesign
- Using the LMS for assessment
- Improving program level assessment
- Examining high impact student success strategies
- Student and alumni survey strategies
- Redesigning assignments to promote critical thinking
- Research methods review
- Introduction to service learning
- Constructing effective rubrics.

Session evaluations indicated that an overwhelming majority of respondents believed that session content and materials were useful.

In spring 2012, CETL launched a new faculty competitive grant opportunity directly related to assessment. These action-research grants focused on increasing student achievement and/or retention. Grant amounts ranged from $1,500 - $3,000. Areas of focus for these research grants included impacting small group reading comprehension, expanding Spanish language skills in the Social Work program, using digital journaling in internship experiences, implementing Student-Centered Instructional Teaching in gatekeeper computer science courses, and linking student demographics to program level assessments in psychology. A complete list of funded action-research grant applications is provided in Exhibit 38.

CETL also started an inquiry group focusing on the use of iPads to enhance teaching and learning. The group began exploring how the iPad could change how students acquire, interact with, and use technology. CETL purchased 10 iPads for the group to use. Several training sessions focusing on iPad instructional applications were held.

Similar faculty development activities sponsored by CETL are to be offered in AY 2012-2013. Continuing the action-research grants program will be contingent on funding availability.
Conclusion

Over the course of the last academic year, Bowie State University operated within its framework for sustainable assessment with multiple direct and indirect assessment practices at the institutional, program, and course levels. The framework developed provides a check-and-balance system among the campus constituents directly responsible for the systematic approach to campus-wide assessment.

Moreover, the framework for sustainable assessment practices links the various campus entities and the assessment practices directly to the mission and strategic plan of the university allowing for more open communication and collaboration with planning. Assessment practices directly impacting Standards 7, 12, 13, and 14 are highlighted below:

Standard 7 Institutional Assessment
- Developing an institutional effectiveness framework which links planning, budgeting, and assessment and establishing strategic plan indicators
- Administering and reporting the findings of two national indirect assessments of student engagement and satisfaction
- Developing and communicating end of year planning document summaries

Standard 13 – Related Educational Activities, Distance Education
- Approving the BSU Online Policy and establishing standards for distance education courses
- Restructuring administrative oversight for distance education and enhancing student support services
- Migrating to a new learning management system that will be directly linked to the University assessment system

Standard 12
- Creating the GEC as a standing committee of Faculty Senate
- Piloting assessment of several general education competencies in COB
- Planning for external assessment of general education competencies using ETS iSkills and Proficiency Profile instruments (administration underway) and internally developed assessments of written and oral communications and information literacy
- Continuing analysis of EPE results and course evaluations

Standard 14
- Establishing administrative and faculty leadership structures to support continuous assessment practices
- Revising and aligning the program review manual with current practices
- Continuing and enhancing faculty development initiatives
In conclusion, Bowie State University has committed resources and staff to its institutional priority of systematic and sustainable assessment across the institution. The framework for systematic assessment allows various campus constituents to strategically plan and to make decisions based on assessment results. The systematic and sustainable assessment structures in place at BSU are informing practice, impacting decision making, and improving student learning on a continuous basis across campus.
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