STANDARD 4: MEASUREMENT, ANALYSIS, AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

Criterion 4.1 Student Learning Outcomes Assessment

A. Describe the current learning outcomes assessment plan.

Assessment has moved to the center of all Casper College education through hard work in communicating its value to a sometimes resistant campus. The concept of assessment was cultivated more than 10 years ago, but the seed has been slow to germinate. Indeed, there are small spots on campus where it is not well understood and therefore difficult to promote; however, the importance of assessment and its culture has spread to encompass the vast majority of campus.

Since a new president was hired, more resources have been dedicated to training college personnel on the value of assessment and on how to do it. Assessment is now connected to all of the departmental reviews. Since 2005, there has been rapid progress in bringing all departments into the assessment culture. In 2005, 36 departments had working assessment plans and by spring of 2006, 52 departments had the plans. Currently, all academic departments within the business unit have working assessment plans, both in WEAVE and the new assessment plan template provided this last fall 2009-10.

Casper College has used a variety of means to assess the student experience, leading to steady improvement in delivery of such services as registration and management of financial aid. In 2006-2007 the Wyoming Community College Commission purchased the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE). This survey provides data about the way students interact with the college, its staff and other students. Casper College administered the assessment to a group of students for the first time in the spring of 2007, gaining helpful feedback on a variety of issues. More assessment was performed in 2009, and the college is relying on this tool and others to fulfill its mission to the students.

Like many institutions, Casper College’s first forays into outcomes assessment had mixed results. Even before the 1999 HLC visit, assessment was known to be a concern at Casper College. The culture at the college was not just ambivalent toward the concept of assessment; it was actually hostile, believing it to be a waste of time. The college has worked to develop a culture that values and embraces assessment. Assessment has been integral in the continuation of many departmental accreditations. In the fall of 1997 an Outcomes Assessment Committee was formed in preparation for the 1999 accreditation. It consisted of one representative from each academic division and one person from the library. At the time the college had limited resources to fully staff this project, so a faculty member became a half-time administrator to begin the task of designing and implementing a working outcomes assessment plan. Megan Graham, an electronics instructor, became the Director of Outcomes Assessment. This preparation was only a start. In 1999 the HLC accreditation evaluators indicated concerns about Casper College’s progress in implementing outcomes assessment.

The role of the Outcomes Assessment Committee changed from designing an assessment plan for the entire college to one of disseminating the process throughout the college and developing a plan from the bottom up. This proved to be very time-consuming, yet more productive in the long-term. Every program in the college was tasked with developing their own assessment outcomes and measuring them. Some programs found this an easy task because it was an extension of their normal methods of evaluating programs.
As assessment efforts expanded, the General Education Committee produced a set of core requirements for degree programs. To measure these requirements, the Assessment Committee needed to produce institution-wide outcomes. Here the committee adopted the CAAP test, the Math Department also adopted a common final for the DVST classes, and the English Department developed writing outcomes and sampled random writing assignments from all of their students. There still was no clear set of outcomes for the sciences or for the social sciences. Although both of these divisions had departmental assessments, the institution-wide outcomes were not measured consistently.

With the hiring of a new president and the infusion of money into assessment-related activities, there were more resources available for assessment. In 2006 the institution hired a full-time assessment director to work in conjunction with the Director of Institutional Research. These positions work together to accumulate data necessary for IPEDS reporting as well as other federal and state reporting requirements. The college also collects data via surveys and faculty evaluations.

The Outcomes Assessment Committee was restructured and given many opportunities to travel to student learning assessment conferences and conferences on the assessment of general education. Attendance at the workshops increased and understanding of the importance of assessment expanded within the academic culture. The institution purchased WEAVE online, an assessment management system that helps everyone stay focused on assessment activities.

Assessment is now tied to departmental reviews, bridging budgeting to assessment. Departmental program reviews provide a continuous and comprehensive tool for departments to review their performance. The review incorporates program goals and outcomes assessment plans and data. The reviews are updated every year and every three years the program is reviewed by the Vice President of Academic Affairs. While the academic departments of the college do these annual assessments, the depth of these reviews is not consistent; however the business unit has worked tirelessly on improving on their depth and comprehensiveness of their departmental reviews and assessment plans.

Objectives are the foundation of student learning and learning outcomes are the measuring stick used to determine if objectives are being met. The learning outcomes for all Casper College’s courses, programs, certificates and degrees are a reflection of the Mission Statement. “With the mission of student success, Casper College provides educational opportunities to provide quality of life and sustainable community building and citizenship.” The college views the mission not as a static statement that may be updated each decade but as a credo for the institution. Assessment is viewed as an organic process present when faculty develop and change courses which can stand alone or be integrated into programs of study. A commitment to the development of a “culture of assessment” continues and has progressed over the last several years. This commitment shows when Casper College, as an institution, asks itself the question, “Why are we doing the things we do?”
This self-study shows the following:

- The results testify to the achievement of the college’s stated goals for learning
- The results enable the college to strengthen and improve the capacity for student learning
- The results have credibility with the faculty responsible for creating effective learning environments

Casper College decided to focus on emphasizing the importance of assessment to newly-hired faculty. New employees are initially told of the college’s commitment to continual improvement in student learning. A condition of hiring is a willingness to measure student learning and to make appropriate adjustments in courses, programs and instructional methods. Some faculty continue to resist the assessment process, however, the vast majority show a clear commitment; enough to create assessment as a culture for the college as a whole.

Changes at the highest levels of Casper College’s administration have had a great impact on the development of a culture of assessment. With the new administration came a transition from a half-time position of assessment coordinator to the creation and hiring of a Director of Assessment with a full-time administrative assistant, work-study help, and a self-contained budget. The director of assessment was qualified with outstanding education, training, and experience in assessment to monitor our process and progress. The director made huge strides in getting the campus involved in assessment and becoming excited about it. Since then, the director’s position has changed hands with the resignation of the first full-time director followed by the resignation of the replacement. The first Director of Assessment provided workshops for the faculty, staff, and administration. In addition, committees to monitor assessment were created to keep awareness of assessment prominent in the campus culture, not only for the academic arm, but also for the campus as a whole. The current Director of Assessment has refocused those efforts to a uniform method of stating outcomes and measures of those outcomes. She has held numerous workshops for faculty and staff highlighting the importance of assessment and demystifying the process. While still in its infancy, information that had been previously been housed in the WEAVE program is in the process of being translated and transferred into the new rubrics created by our new accreditation focus.

Casper College’s learning outcomes are a reflection of the Mission Statement and follow the general principles:

- Assessment is faculty driven but is a responsibility of all employees.
- Assessment includes not only empirical data but also information of a qualitative nature.
- Multiple measures are used in the assessment of the college’s mission, vision, and goals.
- Assessment is critical to the welfare and learning of the student.
- Assessment is used to institute change and improvements.

Casper College offers more than 100 majors ending in an associate’s degree or a certificate. Assessment plans for each program are available with department chairs and division chairs. With the purchase of WEAVE online, the goals and objectives as well as the assessment plans were being transferred over to the web. The goals and techniques to measure the goals were used to establish outcomes at the course level. As the courses required for a degree or certificate in a
major were completed, the goals and outcomes for the degree or certificate program were also completed.

General education has a set of goals and outcomes. The classes within the general education curriculum are used to fulfill the goals of general education. On its own, no individual class can achieve all of the goals and outcomes set forth by general education. But the compilation of a number of classes will allow the students to fulfill the expectations. Faculty evaluate courses using a broad range of measures, including but not limited to, monitoring specific examination questions, evaluation of portfolios, and success in advanced course work. Students are evaluated using written work, examinations and skills tests. The CAAP test and more recently the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) are being used as additional tools to assess student engagement at Casper College. Students are evaluated through observation of skills in lab and clinical settings. Critiques of student work done by other students are another form of assessment.

Major measures of success are how well our students succeed after transferring to other colleges, how they perform on certification exams, and their job placement after graduating from Casper College. Feedback from employers is also evaluated to assess how well the college is fulfilling the needs of the employer as well as the training of the student. Student evaluations are used in continuing education to determine the effectiveness of noncredit courses. In addition, employer comments are solicited to be sure the employee is trained to the satisfaction of the employer. Annual reports from the University of Wyoming include transfer data for students from the state’s seven community colleges. Casper College is able to determine how its students that transfer to UW are performing. Casper College transfer students consistently receive higher UW GPAs than native UW students. Casper College transfers more students to UW than any other post-secondary institution. Faculty members from all of the community colleges meet with their UW program counterparts to discuss student outcomes and curricula.

Through the mandate of the Wyoming State Legislature, the Wyoming Community College Commission addresses a set of core indicators. These core indicators are listed below. Legislation proposed for the 2009 revised some of the following core indicators:

- Graduation rates – Records and tracking are maintained by the institution
- Passage on licensing tests – Results are kept in department, division and institutional offices
- Transfer rates – Maintained in the records office
- Placement rates – Maintained in the placement center and at the program and division levels
- Instructional data – The range of testing required by the state mandate includes, for example, CAAP test data and the tracking of DVST students into subsequent course work
- Specialized testing done by nationally recognized certification exams, e.g., the Business Division uses Microsoft, Cisco, and Hospitality Management tests

When individual instructors develop outcomes and assessments, they use factors such as accreditation agencies, national professional standards, local area requirements, and personal goals they have for their students. The instructor considers input from community advisory boards and committees, from prospective employers, and from transfer institutions. In some cases, such as the Education Department, student surveys help provide an additional perspective. Faculty
memberships in professional organizations help faculty stay current in their disciplines so they can constantly improve and update their programs. An additional assessment tool used by the faculty is articulation meetings with high school colleagues. Meetings concerning high school programs and those corresponding programs at the college foster consistency and student success.

The Department of Continuing Education also evaluates noncredit programs. Class evaluations are mailed to the students after the completion of each class. Online surveys are emailed to workshop and conference participants. Continuing education staff and instructors review the evaluations and make appropriate changes. Taken together these tools provide an ongoing process for the faculty to assess the outcomes of courses, programs, certificates, and degrees at Casper College. Every degree in the School of Business and Industry for which we are seeking accreditation requires 5 core courses (ACCT 2010, BADM 2010, IMGT 2400, MGT 2100 and MKT 2100). From these core courses a statement of core outcomes has been developed. Building upon this core, each department head has worked with their faculty to frame one or two additional outcomes statements that relate specifically to their area of study.

B. Describe the student learning outcomes assessment process and include information about the following:

- What student learning data is collected and why.

Students are evaluated using written work, examinations and skills tests. The CAAP test and more recently the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) are being used as additional tools to assess student engagement at Casper College. Students are evaluated through observation of skills in lab and clinical settings. Critiques of student work done by other students are another form of assessment. Community College Survey of Student Engagement for academic years 2007 and 2009 will be available in the resource room.

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Through the mandate of the Wyoming State Legislature, the Wyoming Community College Commission addresses a set of core indicators. These core indicators are listed below; with the complete Wyoming Community Colleges Annual Partnerships Reports available in the resource room. Legislation proposed for the 2009 session may revise the following core indicators:

- Graduation rates – Records and tracking are maintained by the institution
- Passage on licensing tests – Results are kept in department, division and institutional offices
- Transfer rates – Maintained in the records office
- Placement rates – Maintained in the placement center and at the program and division levels
- Instructional data – The range of testing required by the state mandate includes, for example, CAAP test data and the tracking of DVST students into subsequent course work
- Specialized testing done by nationally recognized certification exams, e.g., the Business Division uses Microsoft, Cisco, and Hospitality Management tests

- How the business unit uses student learning data to improve the business program and enhance student learning.

During the 2007-08 academic year Casper College utilized the Weave online system for organizing and summarizing outcomes assessment data. The former Business Division uploaded departmental review data into Weave online. From this initial data, the former Business Division aligned their programs to core requirements from a survey conducted by the former chair. From this survey, the following courses are now required courses in each program:
- MKT 2100 Principles of Marketing
- IMGT 2100 Principles of Management
- IMGT 2400 Introduction to Informational Management
- BADM 2010 Business Law I
- ACCT 2010 Principles of Accounting I

During fall semester 2008, the accounting department analyzed grades and recognized a decline in student performance due to an intentional increase in academic standards for accounting classes. During annual departmental meetings, the former division chair suggested the addition of new math prerequisites. In the Marketing Department, individual projects have been revised. New Marketing students who graduate will be required to sit for a Marketing Certification Examination offered through Mark-Ed which is an Ohio State University based examination. Business Computer students were found to be challenged in several areas, Math, English and math-based computer applications such as Microsoft Excel. Capstone projects for management students include the analysis of a Fortune 500 business operation, which includes SWOT analysis, Boston Consulting Group and Five Competition course analyses. In the fall semester 2009, faculty members have began a new Casper College assessment program that is now tied to departmental reviews, bridging budgeting to assessment. Departmental program reviews provide a continuous and comprehensive tool for departments to review their performance. The review incorporates program goals and outcomes assessment plans and data. The reviews are updated every year and every three years the program is reviewed by the Vice President of Academic Affairs. While the academic departments of the college do these annual assessments, the depth of these reviews is not consistent among schools with individual schools and programs having more extensive reviews.

- How comparative or benchmark data is used to enhance and improve student learning.

Major measures of success are how well our students succeed after transferring to other colleges, how they perform on certification exams, and their job placement after graduating from Casper College. Feedback from employers is also evaluated to assess how well the college is fulfilling the needs of the employer as well as the training of the student. Student evaluations are used in
continuing education to determine the effectiveness of noncredit courses. In addition, employer comments are solicited to be sure the employee is trained to the satisfaction of the employer. In the past, faculty members have used grading for benchmark purposes because the assessment instrument provided by the Casper College Director of Assessment was Weave Online; thus many faculty kept records of grades and other course specific objectives; some well thought out and other not measureable. The first step was to provide a user-friendly assessment plan with an implementation template that was developed by the new Director of Assessment. Second, Casper College needed to provide a culture in which faculty members recognized the importance of creating and sustaining a faculty culture that understands, values and employs assessment. And last, how would be use that information to enhance and improve student learning. Three key criteria have come to the forefront during this process: 1) The use of assignments, projects, and exams to identify learning objectives; 2) Learning artifacts that are gathered and reviewed to assess whether students are achieving desired outcomes; 3) and what to do if the desired outcome measure are not met; what are the causes and potential remedies. The Director of Assessment is working on faculty development and training; faculty members are assessing classes/programs for behavior-oriented criteria that will measure students’ achievement in with at least three objectives for each business program. In the past, with the use of Weave Online, faculty looked extensively at grades, FTEs, the number of majors and their GPAs. Assessment now includes a template that utilizes mission, goals, assessment, budget, facilities, etc. As the assessment plan is implemented and data is collected and analyzed, programs are expected to complete an annual assessment update; keeping the plan fluid and usable.

- How the business unit improves, refines or enhances the student outcomes assessment process.

Casper College used WEAVE as their assessment program and while assessment was not what it should have been; the business unit did an admirable job of attempting to comply with college assessment mandates using Weave. The Business Division (which later morphed into the School of Business and Industry), did recognize the need for assessment, and differing programs used differing methods for assessing student learning, as an example, the Medical Transcription program (a discontinued program, due to low enrollment) used a pre-test and a post-test to determine that students had indeed learned the required skills. The records available for some of these programs and the decisions made regarding them will be made available in the resource room with a few of these methods unavailable. All available records will be in the resource room. While there is no uniformity, it does show the commitment of the faculty to ensure that students were learning what was considered best practices.

Each program was pretty much on their own to interpret the results of the data that they gathered, and though there was no campus-wide mandate, the Business faculty monitored the results; when a problem was discovered, they ferreted out the reasons behind the problem and found solutions. For example, faculty members in the accounting department were dismayed by the declining passing grades in accounting courses. When they compared the grades of the general education classes, the grades in the accounting courses and ACT scores, they discovered that students who did well in math were much more likely to succeed in accounting courses. Based upon this finding, students must now satisfy a prerequisite of a “C” or better in Math 920 or ACCT 0900, or have an ACT Math score of 21 or better, or have and appropriate COMPASS exam score within the last year.
While each program reviewed its own student data, no organized process of assessment school-wide has existed other than WEAVE, which was not considered successful and therefore during the fall semester of 2009, Casper College began using a new assessment process that business faculty seem to be utilizing. With the changes in our assessment process we hope to be able to pinpoint areas of strength, as well as areas that require attention.

C. **List the student learning outcomes for each program seeking accreditation or re-affirmation.**

The complete assessment plans which include all business departmental review forms and assessment plans will be available in Appendix 5. However, available in the resource room will be all business department plans discussing student learning outcomes which include the new assessment plans which began in 2009-10 and the former WEAVE plans used in 2007-08 and 2008-09 and additional information related to our older assessment plans and the new (Fall 2009) assessment plan.

D. **Complete Table 2 – Student Learning Results**

See Appendix 6.

E. **Provide a comparison of the achievement of students receiving instruction through traditional delivery compared with those who receive instruction through use of alternative methods of instructional delivery.**

For these purposes we have used a comparison of the five core courses used in our assessment and courses taught in the flex lab. Prior to Spring 2010, all course evaluations and assessment used Scantron sheets limiting the use of data. This last spring, the new Director of Assessment developed paper and electronic course evaluations, providing the school and students with a clearer picture of all Casper College courses. With the development of this new evaluative process, faculty members and administration will have a better response rate, and a tool that is in line with what faculty members, faculty alliance and the faculty senate requested. Lastly, alternative methods of instruction are fairly new and there has been no ideal establishment of assessment much less comparison of instructional delivery methods. Formative evaluation gives instructors a way to shift focus if the course is not proceeding according to plans while summative evaluation really focuses on student satisfaction with the course and the instructor and does not really measure the dynamics and rhythms of student learning. Each course has a formative evaluation process that is built into most class structures.

**Criterion 4.2 Program Evaluation**

A. **Describe how the business unit conducts each program evaluation.**

The Vice President of Academic Affairs office requires a Department Review every three years for all programs. A template is provided to the program to complete. The completed document is used as a discussion point between the Vice President of Academic Affairs, the Dean of the school and the program chair. Items on the template include but are not limited to
the mission, goals, assessment, budget, equipment, facilities and other pertinent departmental support. In conjunction with the departmental review process each program is responsible for updating and maintaining an assessment plan. As the assessment plan is implemented and data is collected and analyzed, programs are also expected to complete an annual assessment update. This update will encourage programs to use the data collected for appropriate improvements and potential curricular changes, a critical step in closing the assessment loop. It is important to note that this part of the process is new to Casper College. Prior to academic year 2009-10, department heads and program directors at Casper College were asked to submit their departmental review in to WEAVE, an online assessment software system annually. Programs were only required to respond to two assessment questions. Additionally WEAVE continued to upgrade and make changes, with the faculty members and administration at Casper College not finding the software to be effective, efficient or user friendly since the information was in Access. The new Director of Assessment made the decision to find a new process. Assessment plans and reports for the School of Business (and this fall Industry) can be found at: http://www.caspercollege.edu/assessment/database_01.html.

B. Describe faculty involvement in the program evaluation process.

Department heads are responsible for assessment plans. Many department heads have met individually with the new Director of Assessment; this is particularly true in the business unit. All business department heads have met with the Director of Assessment and have attended training at the college in addition to training during the most recent ACBSP Conference in Los Angeles.

C. Describe what data is collected to assess the effectiveness of courses and programs to meet educational objectives of graduates.

All assessment plans with data collected will include program learning outcomes, how/where the outcome is learned, evidence or indicators of learning, collection method, analysis methods and feedback procedures.

D. Describe how program evaluation data and information is shared with internal and external stakeholders.

At this time Casper College and the School of Business and Industry is working at refining our evaluation process and ensuring that it provides something of value. Too often we have not really used the data we have in a way that provides dialogue as a source of evaluative material, providing an avenue for the establishment of collaborative, transformative processes that begins with a vision, goal, objectives and ends with outcomes that should be reliable, measureable and most importantly assess the true effectiveness of our programs. We are in the process of sharing the valid and reliable information we have with faculty members, staff and administration and as other schools complete their assessment plans, those plans and their evaluations will be made available http://www.caspercollege.edu/assessment/database_01.html.

E. Describe the improvements that have been implemented as a result of the program evaluation.

Faculty members in the accounting department were dismayed by the declining passing grades in accounting courses. When they compared the grades of the general education classes, the grades in the accounting courses and ACT scores, they discovered that students who did well in math were much more likely to succeed in accounting courses. Based upon this finding, students must
now satisfy a prerequisite of a “C” or better in Math 920 or ACCT 0900, or have an ACT Math score of 21 or better, or have and appropriate COMPASS exam score within the last year. Programs that were not strong and had low enrollments were changed significantly or respectively cancelled. Additionally, strong programs were promoted and most programs and classes are now articulated with schools that will be support those programs with a bachelor’s degree.

**Criterion 4.3 Student Assessment**

**A. Explain the process for identifying student needs for developmental assistance.**

Casper College follows the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act in providing services and accommodations to students with disabilities. While it is the college’s responsibility to notify students of services and how to access them, it is the student’s responsibility to self-identify and request accommodations. Accommodations are determined on an individual basis according to required documentation of disability. Services provided through the Office of Accommodative Services include but are not limited to:

- Assistance in completing the admissions process
- Academic advising
- Career counseling
- Classroom accommodations (sign language/oral interpreters, note takers, readers, appropriate seating arrangements)
- Alternate testing, taped text information, print materials in alternate format (Braille)
- Referral to resources on and off campus
- Use of assistive technology (screen readers, scan and read programs, assistive listening equipment, adaptive keyboards, zoom text, voice recognition programs, tape recorders, spell checkers, laptop computers)

**B. Explain the process for determining and awarding advanced placement, if applicable.**

Casper College has an Advanced Placement Program Policy that allows students showing proficiency by passing the CEEB Advanced Placement Examination will receive Casper College credit and a grade of S. Casper College awards credit for CEEB Advanced Placement Program Examinations in a number of areas. The subject areas awarded advanced placement based upon CEEB scores are in the 2009-10 catalog on page 20 and 21.

**C. Explain the student advisement process, including the use of remedial assessment information.**

Each student is assigned a faulty member as an advisor. Usually the faculty member teaches classes within their area of study. As an example, and accounting student usually has an accounting instructor as their advisor. The faculty member looks closely at the student’s grades, as well as their ACT and/or COMPASS scores. Based upon these scores students are encouraged to take courses that are challenging, but not frustrating. A student is not placed in a course for which they do not have the required prerequisites without approval of the course instructor, and some indication (such as life experience or ACT scores) that they will be able to succeed in the course.

**D. Report data that correlates assessment scores to retention and improved academic skills as a result of developmental offerings.**
E. **Complete Table 3 – Organizational Performance Results.**

Table 3 Organizational Performance Results is in Appendix 7.

**Summary of Standard 4 – Measurement, Analysis and Knowledge Management**

*Provide a summary of strengths and opportunities for improvement the institution plans to address related to Standard 4.*

While historically this has been a very weak area for the institution, the knowledge and passion exhibited by the Director of Assessment has been a very welcome change. When receiving accreditation from the Higher Learning Commission, assessment was one noted area of concern. Casper College has begun to embrace an institution wide philosophy of assessment. As a result, all programs in all schools are required to implement cohesive assessment procedures. The School of Business and Industry has led the way, being the first school to have both designed and implemented their assessment procedure. The School of Business and Industry looks forward to the type of support such a philosophy can offer.

The faculty members of the School of Business and Industry are committed to their program success and have shown this by assessing and responding each in their own way. During the academic years 2007-08 and 2008-09, Weave Online was mandated by the former Director of Assessment with all Casper College Divisions Chairs and Program Directors. The former Business Division had assessment plans in place (Weave online) and began entering cumulative data regarding FTE’s, grades, goals, objectives and other pertinent data to assess performance and other criteria that the college assessment director required at that time. Those plans for Weave will be available in the resource room for all college programs and have been included in this self-study. While the current director of assessment does not believe Weave is a valuable assessment tool; it was in place and used by business faculty to assist in student assessment, program administration and in the establishment of an assessment plan. At the time, it was a cohesive and prescribed method for faculty members and business faculty members used those Weave plans to find weaknesses, adjusting course offerings and prerequisites accordingly. During the 2009-10 year, Casper College began a new program for assessment complete with a template, training and a more complete picture of the assessment process. Each program or department is required to update, maintain and implement an assessment plan based upon new criteria. Each business department and program has worked both individually and as a team with the current Director of Assessment; leading the way at the college by embracing the new, improved assessment plan. As the assessment plan has been implemented, data collected and analyzed, department heads, program directors and the dean are using the data collected for potential curricular changes and appropriate improvements such as equipment, hours of class offerings and student assessment outcomes in a more meaningful way.