

“What’s the Buzz”

IAP

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Inaugural Issue: Getting to Know Us

Special points of interest:

- Information about the Office of institutional Assessment
- Mission, vision, outcomes, principles
- NSSE snapshot
- Roundtable dates

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Meet the New People in Institutional Assessment

We have two new people working in Institutional assessment: Carol Lerch and Kristina Rearick.

Dr. Carol Lerch is the Assistant Vice President for Assessment and Planning, and will be working with all areas of the campus to build upon the assessment work already begun. Carol comes to us after a long career in the classroom, teaching mathematics for the past twenty years at three private colleges in New England. Through her work as a professor, Carol developed an interest in assessment, and became the first Director of Assessment at Daniel Webster College in New Hampshire. She created the assessment plan and procedures still in use today. Dr. Lerch has a doctorate from Boston College, specializing in curriculum and instruction.



Dr. Carol Lerch

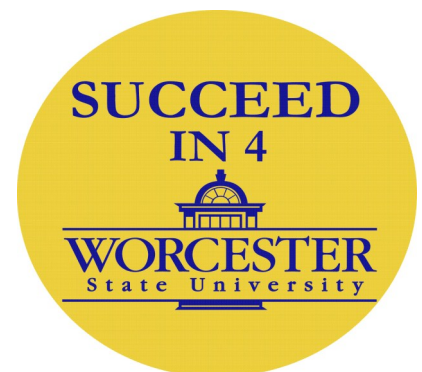


Dr. Kristina Rearick

Dr. Kristina Rearick divides her time at Worcester State university between the offices of Institutional Assessment & Planning and Institutional Research. Kristina’s background includes providing therapy to special needs children and conducting research projects at a residential school treating children and adolescents with emotional and behavioral problems. Kristina has a doctorate in educational psychology, which studies how people learn and develop in an educational setting and the efficacy of interventions to aid in student learning. She is also developing her skills in institutional research and is doing some of the analysis on the NSSE data.

Welcome Back to Campus

A lot has happened over the summer, new people have arrived and new initiatives have begun. “Succeed in 4” focuses on students achieving their goal of a college degree in 4 years. We will all be working together to help in this process. Succeed in 4 is one of many projects related to our renewed commitment to retaining and graduating our students. Dr. Cullum outlined the major points of the initiative on Opening Day.



Assessment Committee

There has been an Assessment Committee in the past at WSU. I hope to have this committee reconstituted. The members of the committee would come from across campus, from academics and student affairs, and would work with departments and programs as assessment liaisons. The first action I would like the committee to take would be to develop a mission statement and vision statement for the Office of Institutional Assessment & Planning.

Goals and Objectives

Goals

1. Develop a culture of assessment on campus
2. Involve faculty and staff in assessment activities
3. Increase the level of practice of assessment

Objectives

- * Develop and disseminate best practices for enabling continuous organizational learning and development
- * Facilitate assessment planning and analysis by academic and administrative departments,
- * Provide information and technical expertise to assist academic and other units at all levels in measuring and improving student learning, administrative objectives and learning outcomes.

What is Assessment?

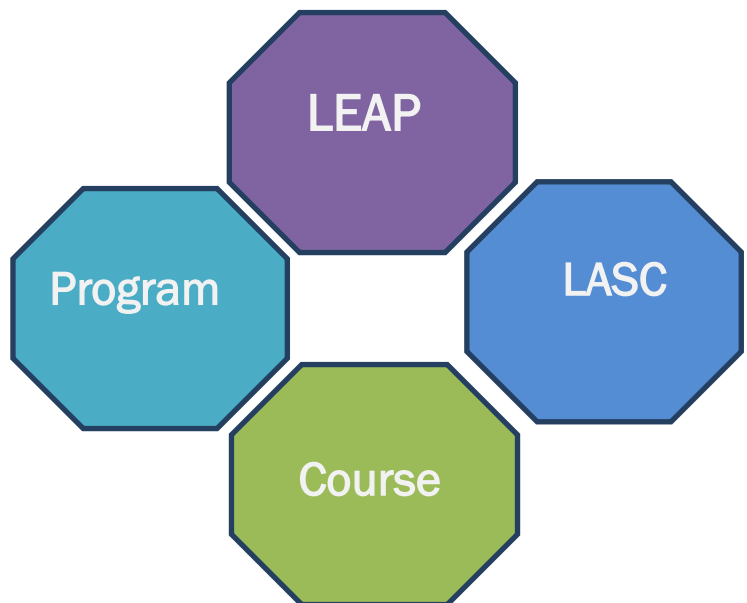
Assessment is a process whereby we know whether students are learning. We create clear statements of what is expected, student learning outcomes (SLOs), create activities that guide students in the pursuit of knowledge, and provide multiple opportunities for students to engage in the process of learning.

How do we know if students have learned? This is the key to the assessment process. We “systematically gather, analyze and interpret evidence” (Suskie, 2009, p. 4), in order to determine what students are learning, and what they will be able to do when they graduate from Worcester State University .

Meaningful assessment occurs at multiple levels: course, program and institution, all in support of the mission of the university. Running throughout all three levels is assessment of general education, LASC.

Many programs are well underway on this journey, and others are wading into the waters. Those programs with outside accrediting have been doing outcomes assessment for many years, and can be campus ‘leaders’, resources for those who need some assistance or advice.

As we look at the data we gather, we can make informed decisions about our work, all with the goal of supporting students in their academic pursuits.



Workshops on Assessment

Topic	Dates
Writing Measurable Outcomes	September 26 & 27
Creating Rubrics	October 3 & 4

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"I don't have time to read a book a month what about a pamphlet club?"

Purpose of "What's the Buzz"

Transparency is of paramount importance when it comes to assessment procedures and results.

What's the Buzz will be one of the sources for information on assessment activities and results. In the inaugural issue, we present some general information from the NSSE 2011 survey.

"75% of the first-year students felt that WSU placed substantial emphasis on academics"

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The National Survey of Student engagement (NSSE) collects information annually from first-year and senior students about the nature and quality of their undergraduate experience. Since its inception, nearly 1500 baccalaureate-granting colleges and universities in the United States and Canada have used NSSE to measure the extent to which students engage in effective educational practices that are empirically linked with learning, personal development, and other desired outcomes such as satisfaction, persistence, and graduation.

Almost two million first-year and senior students from 751 institutions in the United States and Canada were invited to participate in the 2011 NSSE administration. Worcester State University was one of those participating institutions, with 710 randomly selected students participating in the study. There were 274 first-year students and 436 seniors comprising the group from WSU.



	FT	M	F	Campus Resident	Traditional Age (<24)
First-year	95%	31%	69%	48%	93%
Senior	75%	29%	71%	12%	56%

Academic Challenge

Challenging intellectual and creative work is central to student learning and collegiate quality. Colleges and universities promote high levels of student achievement by emphasizing the importance of academic effort and setting high expectations for student performance.

The NSSE survey looks at a number of factors that indicate whether students find their college work challenging. Among them are hours spent preparing for class, the number of written papers or reports of different lengths, and whether the coursework emphasizes critical thinking.

55% of the first-year students frequently worked harder than they thought they could to meet expectations of the faculty.

31% for first-year students spent more than 15 hours per week preparing for class.

Active & Collaborative Learning

Students learn more when they are involved in their education and asked to think about what they are learning in different settings. Collaborating with others in solving problems or mastering difficult material prepares them for the messy, unscripted problems they will encounter daily during and after college.

Students were asked in the NSSE survey whether they contributed to class discussions, worked with other students in or out of class, participated in a community-based project, or made a class presentation.

53% of first-year students frequently discussed readings or ideas from coursework outside of class.

43% frequently worked with other students on class projects and 37% worked with peers on assignments outside of class.

Roundtable Discussions of NSSE Data

There is a lot of data in the NSSE Report that we should explore. There are five general categories, two of which have been introduced on the above. The other areas are Student–Faculty Interaction, Supportive Campus Environment, and Enriching Educational Experiences.

Participants attending roundtables during the year will explore data from three of these categories. It is through discussion and collaboration that we gain knowledge about our campus environment.

Topic	Dates
Level of Academic Challenge	October 19 & 20
Student-Faculty Interaction	February 15 & 16
Enriching Educational Experiences	March 28 & 29



Coming Issues

In the coming issues, we will present findings from the NSSE data and the round table discussions by faculty and staff. There is a wealth of information contained in the data and we hope to explore the data with the community.

Since WSU is designated as a “LEAP Institution,” we will have a series of roundtables on the Value Rubrics. As an institution, we want to decide which of these rubrics we want to adopt, discuss any needed adaptations, or create additional rubrics for our use.

One of the outcomes of the Office of Institutional Assessment is to “develop and disseminate best practices” so we will host a series of workshops for large and small groups on various topics in assessment. I am planning to visit every office on campus during the year and will be asking you for ideas on how we can best support your work.

Come visit!!

Office of Institutional Assessment

Helen G. Shaughnessy
Administration Building
Room 352

Dr. Carol Lerch
Assistant Vice President for
Assessment & Planning

Phone: 508-929-8119
Email: clerch@worchester.edu

Dr. Kristina Rearick
Database Coordinator &
Research Analyst

Phone: 508-929-8323
Email: krearick@worchester.edu

Visit us at

<http://worchester.edu/InstitutionalAssessment/default.aspx>

