

## NOTES ON WASC, ASSESSMENT, & EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

From the *WASC 2001 Handbook of Accreditation*  
[www.wascweb.org/senior/handbook.pdf](http://www.wascweb.org/senior/handbook.pdf)

### Educational Objectives

The University

- Has educational objectives (Standard 1.2).
- Aligns objectives with institution's core purposes (1.2).
- Creates competencies, indicators, & levels of achievement, (1.2, 2.2, 2.6) keeping in mind that
  - ▶ "seat time" is not an appropriate measure of how well objectives were met (2.2).
  - ▶ competencies must be reflected in the syllabi of General Education and major courses (2.2).
  - ▶ degrees are defined in terms of levels of achievement necessary for graduation (2.2).
  - ▶ faculty members incorporate the levels of achievement in their standards for evaluating student work (2.6).
- Distributes objectives widely: faculty, students, staff, appropriate community members, etc., know and understand the objectives. A collective vision of educational attainment exists (2.4, 4).
- Gathers evidence regularly to ensure that students develop expected core learning abilities and competencies before they graduate (2, 4.4, 4.5, 4.7).
- Involves appropriate stakeholders—alumni, employers, practitioners—in the assessment of educational programs (4.8).

### Continual Renewal based on Evidence

The University

- Discusses the evidence on how well objectives are achieved (4).
- Uses evidence to set priorities; and to revise purposes, structures, and approaches to teaching, learning and scholarly work (4.3, 4.6, 4.7).
- Reflects on evidence to modify courses & programs and to improve learning (change curricula and pedagogy, improve evaluation means and methodology) (2, 4.3, 4.6, 4.7).

From *A Guide to Using Evidence (January 2002)*  
[www.wascweb.org/senior/Evidence\\_Guide.pdf](http://www.wascweb.org/senior/Evidence_Guide.pdf)

Evidence provided to WASC should concentrate on what the institution *does* and *how well it does* relative to its goals and standards of performance (p. 7-8). In these cases:

**Students**—Provide evidence on learning objectives, whether performance standards are achieved, where improvement is needed (p. 8).

**Faculty**—Provide evidence on the effectiveness of the support provided in developing scholarship of teaching and/or moving toward learning-centered institutional approaches (p. 8).

**Finances and facilities**—Provide evidence on how effectively they are renewed and how they are deliberately deployed to support teaching and learning (p. 8).

### Assessment of Learning

Evidence should

- Cover students' cumulative experience and level of learning at the time of graduation.
- Involve multiple judgments of student performance (e.g., several readers of a portfolio).
- Provide information on multiple dimensions (ie., a number of different dimensions of performance, aggregated across students).
- Involve more than surveys or self-reports of competence and growth. Surveys reveal how students *behave* and *feel*. Also need *what* and *how much* students have learned, which is accomplished through gathering and evaluating actual student learning results and reviewing student learning products (p. 8-9).

### Common Mistakes

- Measuring everything. Better to measure selectively.
- Being too precise. Better to be as precise as necessary, given the problem or question at hand.
- Premature closure. Better to continue reflection (p. 9).

### Good Evidence Is

- Relevant & valid: answers a valid, important question; is related to institution's stated objectives.
- Verifiable: documentable and repeatable.
- Representative: choose typical cases.
- Cumulative: use multiple sources and methods for corroboration.
- Actionable: appropriately disaggregated; reflectively analyzed and interpreted; used to improve (p. 9-12).