

An Assessment Plan for Macalester College

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At Macalester, we are engaged in a cycle of assessment and improvement in our educational program. This takes place at several curricular levels.

Individual faculty, who are deeply invested in their teaching, get feedback on a daily basis from the students with whom they work so closely. Almost every classroom at Macalester is the scene of active discussions and interchange between professor and student.

Departments create and revise their programs for majors and minors. The small size of departments means that every professor sees students who have been previously taught by other faculty and provides a constant flow of information about how well the program is working. The capstone experience provides a chance to communicate with graduating students about the totality of their experience in the major; this will be enhanced as every graduating student will be required to make a peer-reviewed capstone presentation. Because so many Macalester students apply to and enter graduate school, and because they often maintain contact with their Macalester mentors, there is a channel for external feedback and assessment in addition to the once-a-decade formal external reviews of departments.

Our promotion and tenure review system strongly emphasizes the quality of teaching, as assessed both by faculty colleagues and current and former students. The third-year review of faculty gives an opportunity for formative assessment for developing faculty. Both that review and tenure reviews draw on narrative evaluations from students, not a simple aggregate numerical mark.

We know we can do better. There are important aspects of our educational program for which there is currently no clear mechanism to provide an assessment of the quality of our program or guidance about how to improve it.

¹ Staff Assessment Coordinator

The objective of this Assessment Plan is to

1. Develop and deploy an ongoing process for providing useful feedback for improving the effectiveness of our general education program;
2. Provide a forum for continuous dialog about our general educational objectives and a means to keep these objectives in the fore;
3. Engage assessment as a locus of faculty development to help individual faculty, departments, and programs increase the effectiveness of their own approaches to assessment and evaluation.

Creating a Structure to Support Assessment Activities

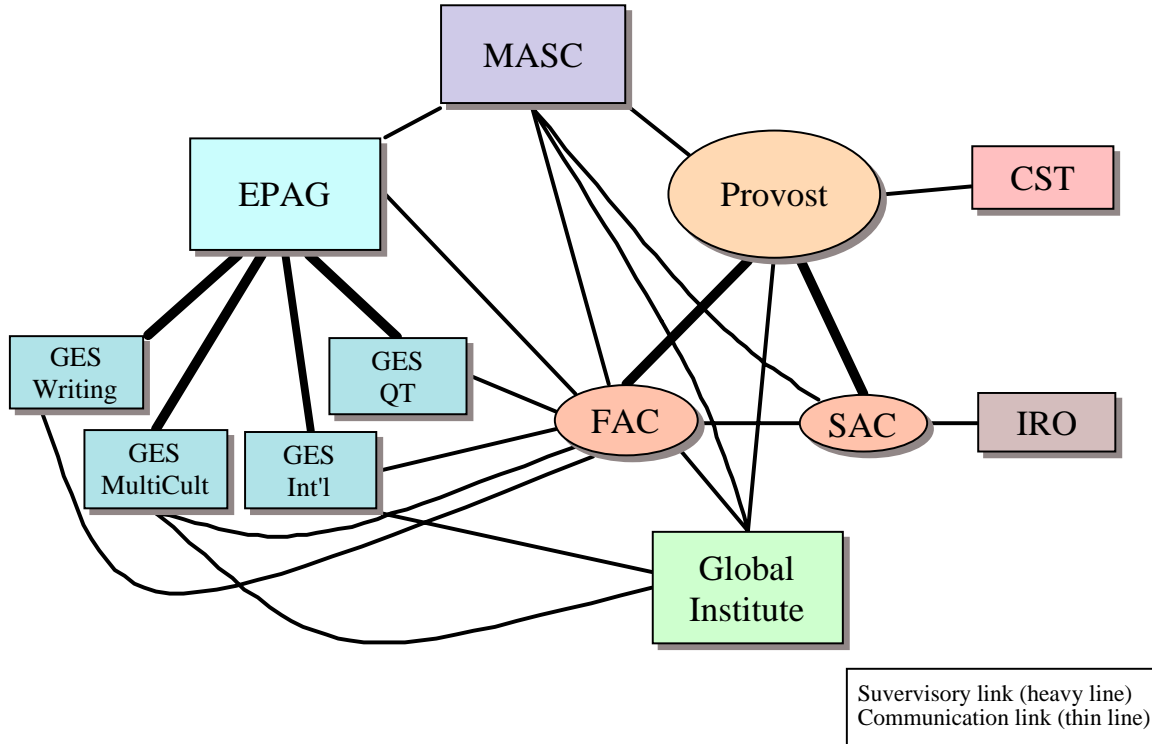
We start with the premise that in terms of talent, expertise, and commitment, the basic human resources for achieving our objectives are already present on campus. An important first step in developing assessment is to organize our talent and expertise effectively, creating incentive, reporting, and accountability structures.

Several parties have important roles to play in assessment:

- EPAG, the Educational Policy and Governance Committee, is the primary group in the faculty for setting curricular policy. The involvement of this elected faculty committee is crucial to establishing the legitimacy of our assessment program to the faculty.
- The Provost, who can channel the resources needed to implement assessment and can create the incentives for the participation of individual faculty, departments, and programs.
- The General Education Subcommittees, four groups recently created by vote of the faculty to oversee and coordinate the new general education requirements in writing, quantitative thinking, multiculturalism, and internationalism.
- CST, the Center for Scholarship and Teaching, which provides an administrative foundation for faculty development.
- The Institute for Global Citizenship, a newly created administrative structure that is intended to become the focal point for educating global citizens and leaders, a key component in the College's mission statement.

- MASC, the Macalester Assessment Steering Committee, created by President Rosenberg, which provides a group of faculty and, potentially, others, who can focus on planning assessment as their primary objective.
- The Faculty Assessment Coordinator (FAC) and the Staff Assessment Coordinator (SAC), newly created positions charged with implementing assessment plans. The individuals who occupy these positions can provide continuity, expertise, and consistency, carrying out the day-to-day and semester-to-semester work.
- The Institutional Research Office, which provides an infrastructure for the collection and analysis of data.

In coordinating these parties, it is important both to provide opportunities for broad consultative communication and also to create strict channels of authority, accountability, and reporting. Committees are effective tools for consultation and for establishing the legitimacy of plans, but often not so effective at implementation. The organizational structure illustrated below attempts to tie together the various groups involved in assessment while not diffusing authority and accountability.



The Provost plays a central role, with both the Faculty and Staff Assessment Coordinators being appointed by and being accountable to her. Institutional Research is tied to the Staff Assessment Coordinator. The Provost also provides the liaison to the CST.

EPAG, which supervises the General Education Subcommittees, receives reports from the Faculty Assessment Coordinator and channels its feedback and direction through the Provost.

The General Education Subcommittees, among their other duties, will contribute to the development of assessment instruments relevant to their field and will use the results of these instruments to assess how well the general education requirements are meeting their objectives and to provide feedback for improvement. The Faculty Assessment Coordinator should be closely connected with the General Education Subcommittees. One way to accomplish this would be for the FAC to serve on each of them in an *ex officio* capacity.

The Institute for Global Citizenship should take the primary responsibility for developing measurable indicators of accomplishment in our quest to develop citizen leaders. Some of these indicators may involve analysis of transcripts or student work, others may be integrated with the assessment instruments described below. There should be a formal interface with the Faculty and Staff Assessment Coordinators, but it is impossible at this stage to define this interface since the Institute is still taking shape.

The Macalester Assessment Steering Committee (MASC) was appointed by President Rosenberg to create an assessment plan; this document is the result. We propose that MASC continue as a body, but reconfigured to include broad representation from across the college community. This will provide a sounding board for assessment ideas and a source of broadly based legitimacy for assessment plans. Representatives to the new Macalester Assessment Steering Committee should be drawn from the College administration, Board of Trustees, faculty, staff, students, and alumni. It is important to represent external stakeholders --- the community, local employers, parents, and other interested parties --- in order to ensure that our assessment provides compelling results to those engaged in the day-to-day activities of education.

Creating Instruments for Assessment

Assessment requires measurement: the collection of information about student performance and the development of attitudes. Such collection goes on in many places at the College: in classrooms, in class projects, in end-of-term course surveys, in student and alumni surveys administered by the Institutional Research Office, and in the Registrar's Office.

The collection of such information, at present, is flawed in terms of its comprehensiveness and reliability. We take it for granted that students in the classroom will participate in class exams and projects; their grades depend on it. We also take it for granted that the registrar will collect and maintain data about student performance in courses; students can't graduate without demonstrating to the registrar that they have fulfilled the requirements. However, outside of this incentive structure, participation is spotty. In most cases, only a small fraction of students fill in course surveys. Getting students to participate in Institutional Research Office studies requires great effort. In addition to discouraging assessment efforts generally, the difficulty of attracting student participation means that data are unreliable. We have no way to know that the students who do participate are representative of students generally and it's almost impossible to secure good longitudinal data that tracks individual students over time, something that is key if we are to assess how Macalester's programs influence student attitudes and abilities.

An important part of creating an effective assessment structure is to create instruments for assessment with universal participation of students. We envision several such instruments:

1. The Incoming Assessment Instrument, perhaps organized as part of orientation or early in the First-Year Seminars.
2. The Transition Assessment Instrument, taking place typically at the end of the sophomore year.
3. The Graduation Assessment Instrument, taking place at about the time a student is graduated from Macalester.
4. A number of Shared Assessment Instruments corresponding to the individual general education graduation requirements.

The Incoming, Transition, and Graduation Assessment Instruments would be roughly two-hour sessions in which every student participates, answering survey and exam questions, writing short essays, and so on.

The purpose of the Incoming, Transition, and Graduation Assessment Instruments is not to evaluate individual students or to classify or grade them. The purpose is to collect information about the impact our education program has on students. The mandatory participation in such occasions is justified because we are a community where all members are expected to contribute to the whole. The time students will spend will benefit future students since it enables us to provide meaningful feedback about the performance of our programs.

The FAC and SAC would be responsible for constructing the Incoming, Transition, and Graduation Assessment Instruments, drawing on substantial input from the General Education Subcommittees, EPAG, and other interested faculty.

The Shared Assessment Instruments will be connected to specific graduation requirements that are implemented in a distributed way across campus. For example, the writing requirement could be instrumented by collecting the papers written by students as part of their work in certified writing courses and submitting them for assessment by trained faculty readers. The quantitative thinking requirement might be instrumented through an in-class examination relating to the learning objectives of the requirement. The Shared Assessment Instruments might even be made part of the Transition and Graduation Assessment Instruments. For instance, questions probing the achievement of the learning objectives of the Internationalism or Multiculturalism general education requirements might be incorporated into the Transition or Graduation Instruments.

It is not our purpose in this plan to lay out the specific form of the Shared Assessment Instruments, just to create the structure for them. The specific form would be determined by the General Education Subcommittees and the Faculty and Staff Assessment Coordinators in consultation with the other parties described above and with diverse members of the faculty. Development of the specific form of shared assessment will provide an important mechanism or forum for the discussion and refinement of the goals of the general education requirements, keeping those goals explicitly before us on a year-to-year basis, rather than receding into forgotten documentation.

The General Education Subcommittees would have the primary responsibility to develop content for the Shared Assessment Instruments, working in collaboration with the FAC and SAC. The

administration of this content, whether it be in the classes certified as meeting the requirements or as part of the Transition or Graduation Occasions, would be overseen by the FAC and SAC.

Assessment instruments that involve only current students cannot be the entire story. It is also important to gain insight from alumni as the lifelong ramifications of their education unfold over time. Such feedback is necessarily delayed by a decade or more and it may often be unclear how to translate the experiences of past graduates into changes in our present educational program. Moreover, participation of alumni in assessment will always be subject to self-selection bias; those alumni who are most favorably disposed to the institution are most likely to participate. But whatever the limitations, we need to remain aware of the importance of keeping our eye on the prize: preparing students for a lifetime of learning and service.

The transition from college is a particularly important phase, and we should develop ways to assess how well the College is preparing students to engage the outside world during the five or so years after graduation.

Tying Assessment Directly to Our Mission

The College's Mission Statement was approved by the Board of Trustees in 1992 and reaffirmed in 2005:

Macalester is committed to being a preeminent liberal arts college with an educational program known for its high standards for scholarship and its special emphasis on internationalism, multiculturalism, and service to society.

As a formal, public expression of our goals this mission statement constitutes a sort of contract between the institution as one party and our students and their families, our faculty and staff as the other party. It is important to ensure that we are doing our best to carry out this mission and to demonstrate our success.

The term "preeminent" is comparative; it's hard to make a comparison to other institutions by purely internal assessment means. For this reason, it is important for Macalester to participate in forms of assessment that compare us directly to other liberal arts colleges. These comparisons will always be imperfect and limited – witness the widespread unease with the U.S. News rankings – but they are nonetheless important. We need to continue to participate in such cross-institutional comparisons.

Cross-institutional forms of detailed assessment of student performance are also critically important to demonstrating our goals of preeminence. The U.S. News rankings are particularly limited since they involve no direct measurement of performance (incoming SAT and class ranks and alumni giving rates are not performance measures!). The College's involvement with the "I-35 Consortium" (involving Macalester, Carleton, Grinnell, and St. Olaf) is a valuable opportunity to ensure that our assessment of performance is at a level that warranted by the term "preeminent." Some of the activities of this Consortium relate to the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) and the Teagle grant and are described later in this document.

The mission statement puts a "special emphasis" on internationalism, multiculturalism, and service. Although Macalester's claims are bolstered by its long history of involvement with internationalism and substantial presence of foreign students on campus, nowadays many institutions state that they provide a "global" education. Claims about "service" are just as common, particularly in religiously oriented colleges. And it's routine for institutions to refer to the importance of diversity. ("Diversity" may not be the same thing as "multiculturalism," but there are many different definitions of multiculturalism even within Macalester.)

David Hume wrote, "A wise man ... proportions his belief to the evidence." Or, in more modern terms, "Extraordinary claims demand extraordinary proof." Our "special emphasis" demands a special demonstration through assessment.

The launching of the Institute for Global Citizenship provides a timely opportunity to develop assessment of our special emphasis. The proposal for the Institute stipulates that "once the Institute is launched, relevant staff and faculty be asked to review carefully the existing programs within their respective areas and re-orient these programs to make them consistent with the new mission."

In the College Catalog, the Mission Statement is followed by a Statement of Purpose and Belief:

At Macalester College we believe that education is a fundamentally transforming experience. As a community of learners, the possibilities for this personal, social, and intellectual transformation extend to us all. We affirm the importance of the intellectual growth of the students, staff, and faculty through individual and collaborative endeavor. We believe that this can be best achieved through an environment that values the diverse cultures of our world and recognizes our

responsibility to provide a supportive and respectful environment for students, staff, and faculty of all cultures and backgrounds.

We expect students to develop a broad understanding of the liberal arts while they are at Macalester. Students should follow a primary course of study in order to acquire an understanding of disciplinary theory and methodology; they should be able to apply their understanding of theories to address problems in the larger community. Students should develop the ability to use information and communication resources effectively; be adept at critical, analytical, and logical thinking, and express themselves well in both oral and written forms. Finally students should be prepared to take responsibility for their personal, social, and intellectual choices.

We believe that the benefit of the educational experience at Macalester is the development of individuals who make judgments and interpretations of the broader world around them and choose actions or beliefs for which they are willing to be held accountable. We expect them to develop the ability to seek and use knowledge and experience in contexts that challenge and inform their suppositions about the world. We are committed to helping students grow intellectually and personally within an environment that models and promotes academic excellence and ethical behavior. The education a student begins at Macalester provides the basis for continuous transformation through learning and service.

Identification of Learning Objectives

The SOPB, to a much greater extent than the mission statement, can be interpreted in terms of learning objectives which can be given operational definitions and assessed. Establishing specific definitions is a task that needs to be shared by several groups: EPAG, MASC, the General Education Subcommittees, the Institute for Global Citizenship.

As a start, and to indicate the sorts of potential that exists for assessment, we refer to a set of learning objectives that were identified in a report titled “An Assessment of Expected Student Outcomes Found in the Macalester College Statement of Purpose and Belief” completed in 2003 by the Institutional Research Office. Students will:

1. acquire an understanding of disciplinary theory and methodology.
2. develop the ability to use information and communication resources effectively.
3. become adept at critical, analytical and logical thinking.
4. learn to express themselves well in written forms.

5. learn to express themselves well orally.
6. develop into individuals who make informed judgments and interpretations of the broader world.
7. develop a broad understanding of the liberal arts.
8. become able to apply their understanding of theories to address problems in the larger community.
9. become prepared to take responsibility for their personal, social, and intellectual choices.
10. develop a willingness to be held accountable for their actions and beliefs.
11. develop the ability to seek and use knowledge and experience in contexts that challenge and inform their suppositions about the world.
12. grow intellectually and personally.

Measures of Assessment

Some of these objectives are easier to measure than others. Indirect measurement through standardized and locally developed surveys can (and have been at Macalester) be used for some assessments. We recognize the need, however, to supplement these indirect measures with direct measures when possible. For example, there are many strategies and tools for directly measuring writing skills and critical/analytical thinking skills, which are already being used at many colleges and universities. At the other extreme, strategies and tools for directly measuring students' understanding of the liberal arts are much more elusive and rare. Consequently we propose to divide the twelve Macalester objectives into three categories:

1. Objectives for which direct assessment strategies and tools are known (and in some cases, already being used);
2. Objectives for which strategies and tools may be available, but are not yet being used; and
3. Objectives for which only indirect measures will be used (unless and until suitable direct measures are found).

Category I: Learning Objectives that have direct measurement tools

1. Students should follow a primary course of study in order to acquire an understanding of disciplinary theory and methodology.

Since 1995 each academic department has had a departmental assessment plan. The purpose of this plan is to gauge the effectiveness of each departmental curriculum for preparing students in that discipline's theory and methodology. As part of the institution's self-study report data collection, each of those departments was asked to update their assessment plan and describe how they were assessing students in their discipline. There remains a considerable degree of variation in how departments describe the effectiveness of their assessment plans. To address this situation, one of the primary responsibilities of the Faculty Assessment Coordinator (FAC) (this position will be described in more detail later in this plan) will be to consult with and advise each department to improve assessment at the departmental level. We note that, as part of her participation in the Leadership Development Seminar, Associate Professor Janet Folina – one of the authors of this plan -- is developing a tool to assist departments in their assessment work

2. Students should develop the ability to use information and communication resources effectively.

The staff of the Dewitt Wallace Library at Macalester has developed a program of assessing information literacy. They have developed a progression of information competencies at four levels: a basic level as a new student, a higher level at the end of the first year, another level as they concentrate in a major discipline, and a final level as they are graduating. This program provides us with a means of measuring the students' ability to use information and communication resources effectively. Briefly this program began in 2003 when a group of ACM/GLCA colleges, including Macalester, applied for a grant to develop a survey tool to test incoming students' knowledge of information fluency concepts. A MITC (Midwest Instructional Technology Center) grant resulted in a web-based survey that was administered to incoming students at eight institutions at the beginning of fall semester 2005. A total of 166 Macalester students completed the survey (a 33.3% response rate). This will provide baseline data and comparisons with peer institutions. The results of this survey are still being analyzed. The survey will be modified if needed, and administered again in fall 2006. The future use of the survey tool is still under discussion, however, if this survey tool does not continue, the intention is to use the survey as a model to develop one that can be used at Macalester for each incoming class.

A new curricular requirement to include library instruction in all first year courses beginning in fall 2007 will provide an opportunity to assess both student learning and faculty perceptions of the requirement. While most of the recent assessment activity has been focused on first year students, this year a campus task force on information fluency has a goal to develop a more comprehensive assessment plan. Currently, a survey is being developed to follow up with students who participated in the 2002 and 2003 labs (now junior and seniors). A comparison group of juniors and seniors who didn't participate in the labs, but had the normal first year introduction to library research, will also be surveyed. Plans are also being made to measure students as they move into their majors and upon graduation.

3 Students should be adept at critical, analytical and logical thinking.

This objective is made complicated from the combination of critical, analytical, and logical all being used as adjectives on "thinking" in the same objective. We plan to assess student progress toward meeting this objective in multiple ways. First, we plan to use the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) test in a longitudinal study funded by the Teagle Foundation. This study will permit us to test a sample of 200 freshmen entering the college in the fall of 2005 during the fall semester of their freshman year, the spring semester of their sophomore year, and the spring semester of their senior year. Two of the three skills measured by the CLA are critical thinking and analytic reasoning. Thus the CLA data should be a key component of measuring student progress on these two skills. Second, we will develop a means of evaluating a new graduation requirement centered on quantitative thinking skills. This requirement will take effect in the fall of 2007; and the exact tools for assessing it will be better defined in due course. An example of the form that this tool might take is the following. We would develop assessment instruments that would include but not be limited to a series of scale-response questions. This instrument would be administered to students at three points in their college careers: at the start of the first year, second semester of the second year, and second semester of the senior year. Each question would consist of a paragraph or two of information and a statement connected with that information. The paragraph and statement would be assessed on the following two scales:

1. the extent to which I agree with the statement.
2. the extent to which I believe I have the skills and knowledge to give a confident answer.

To illustrate, here is a possible quantitative thinking question relating to the study of trade-offs:

There has been an on-going debate about whether child-safety seats should be required on airplanes. Proponents of the requirement, such as the American Academy of Pediatrics, argue that it will save lives; opponents, such as airlines and travel agents point to the increased costs of air travel.

Agree or disagree (Likert scale): There is no meaningful way to balance dollar costs with lives saved.

Level of confidence (Likert scale): If you were charged to make a decision about child-safety seats on airplanes, you would know what information it would be important to collect and how to evaluate that information in order to make a decision.

Third, the Teagle grant will help us develop further tools to assess critical thinking. In collaboration with Macalester, Carleton, and Grinnell, St. Olaf College is taking the lead role to develop a tool to assess critical thinking. The grant provides a framework for sharing such tools among the four participating colleges.

4. Students should express themselves well in written forms.

Writing is currently assessed within courses and departments. College-wide assessment will proceed along two paths. The Teagle grant again provides an opportunity to use the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) test to gather longitudinal data on student writing skills. Student writing ability is the third component of that test. In addition, the faculty has approved a graduation requirement that students will complete a writing skills course. This requirement will take effect in the fall of 2007; and again the exact tools for assessing it are not yet identified. But the requirement is being written so that its impact will be assessable. The FAC will help develop, coordinate, and analyze the results from this assessment. One suggestion made thus far includes the collection of all the essays that students write in the courses taken to meet the writing requirement and the assessment of those essays using a common rubric tied to the criteria that each writing course must meet. A sample of all of these essays would also be read by an independent group of faculty and scored using the same rubric. A comparison of the two scorings (done in the aggregate to avoid this becoming an evaluation of individual faculty members) will enable us to see if the teaching faculty can correctly identify essays that need additional work. If they don't then there is little reason to believe that the writing requirement will be helping students develop writing skills; if they do, then that is an indication that the requirement is having the desired result.

5. Students should express themselves well orally.

The pieces are already in place for assessing this learning objective. In order to graduate from the college each student has to complete a major and every major is required to have a capstone experience. In many cases this capstone experience involves both a written and an oral presentation of the results of the research or creative work done for the capstone. We will use the expertise on campus (Associate Professor Adrienne Christenson, for example) to develop a rating schema that could be used to assess the quality of the oral presentations being given by the seniors. If multiple oral presentations were made and rated in a particular major, important feedback could be given to the department about the need to continue or change their program of helping student develop oral communication skills. If oral presentations were made and rated in multiple disciplines then institutionally some judgment could be made as to an appropriate institutional standard for the presentations. And of course, some mechanism could be developed to provide confidential information to the presenters as to the adequacy of their oral communication skills. This assessment will be handled primarily at the departmental self assessment level, in consultation with the faculty coordinator.

6. Students should develop into individuals who make informed judgments and interpretations of the broader world.

Currently we rely on indirect measures and anecdotal evidence for assessing this goal. In the future, the Teagle grant will provide us with one additional tool for measuring student progress toward meeting this learning objective. One of the other colleges collaborating in this grant is developing a global outlook/global awareness pre/post survey for administration to students who are studying abroad for a semester. Part of the grant activity at that institution is to develop and test this tool to determine whether or not it captures the impact of the study abroad experience. Since more than half of every Macalester graduating class studies abroad for at least one semester, this tool will provide us with valuable data related to this College goal. The opportunity to share results from these surveys with other colleges in the collaboration will also provide us with a means of assessing how prepared our students are (in comparison with students at other colleges) to study abroad. The Staff Assessment Coordinator (SAC) will take responsibility for overseeing this assessment on the Macalester campus and with the other colleges in the collaboration.

Category II: Learning Objectives that as yet have no direct measurement tools

7. Students should develop a broad understanding of the liberal arts.

We have found this learning objective to be one of the most elusive to determine how to measure student progress. We propose to proceed on the assumption that this objective should not be measured while the students are still enrolled and pursuing their degree. A broad understanding of the liberal arts takes time. We envision a structured interview protocol that would lead alumni through a self-analysis of how their undergraduate experiences at Macalester were different from the undergraduate experiences at large universities that their acquaintances might have described. This interview will be in a small group, carried out on a one to one basis, might involve graduates who are out of college for as many as twenty years, and must be constructed in such a way as to maintain the centrality of the liberal arts nature of a Macalester education. This proposal depends on development of a very sophisticated structured interview by the Institutional Research Office, the support and cooperation of the alumni office, and strategy for getting access to a representative sample of alumni participants.

8. Students should be able to apply their understanding of theories to address problems in the larger community.

Two fairly recent curricular developments have made the assessment of this objective easier than ten years ago when it was articulated. For one thing, several courses have been introduced into the curriculum that include an action-research based component (where action research is defined as research that directly benefits some facet of the community external to the college). Students do such research as part of the requirement to successfully complete these courses. The purpose is to learn that the research may be “academic” but that it can still have a practical benefit for an organization outside of the college. Another development is the idea of courses that would have “an urban experience” or “civic engagement” component. If this development continues, and such courses are added to the curriculum, they too would provide students with the means of applying theories to real problems in the larger community out side of the college. In both cases, assessment of these activities will be made with a fairly straight-forward pre/post survey that would be administered within the courses by the instructors (in consultation with the FAC) before and after the actual experiences. The Center for Global Citizenship, as it becomes organized, may provide the framework for defining assessment tools here.

Category III: Learning Objectives which currently lack direct measurement tools and for which indirect tools will be pursued for the time being

The learning objectives in this category fall outside of any specific curricular requirement. Instead, these objectives relate to the broad development of attitudes. Included in assessment instruments will be components relating to these attitudes. We illustrate one possibility relating to the learning objective “Students should choose actions or beliefs for which they are willing to be held accountable.” One way to assess the extent to which we accomplish this objective is to ask all students to write a short essay as part of the general assessment instrument about a matter of broad social concern. For example, we might ask each student to write a 5-minute essay in which they are asked to state as fairly as possible both the reasons to support a ban on abortion and the reasons to oppose such a ban. The essay would be scored based on the ability of the each student to give both sides of the issue.

A general tool that has been informative in the past is the use of individual survey items from the standardized surveys that are part of the annual spring survey schedule (as described in the 1995 Macalester College Assessment Plan). Both the College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ) and the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) provide items that are particularly suitable to this kind of analysis.

For the foreseeable future we will continue the schedule of spring surveys as we have been doing (see Appendix A for a survey schedule through 2012). We plan to do this so that we have a mix of direct measures and indirect measures for each of our twelve learning objectives. Further plans for developing other direct measurement tools for these four attitudinal objectives involve working with the Student Affairs staff to find expertise and interest there to develop local direct measures or to get referrals to outside sources that may provide us with those tools. The Faculty and Staff Coordinators of Assessment will begin this collaboration with Student Affairs staff in the Spring of 2006.

Several of the objectives implied by the Statement of Purpose and Belief involve aspects of student development for which, to be honest, it is difficult to find meaningful measures. Even if we could measure accomplishment toward these objectives, it is unclear how we would be able to use that in creating feedback for reforming our educational program.

For the present, we think the highest priority is to create effective assessment for those aspects of our general education program for which we can envision successful instruments for measurement and channels for using our assessment to inform institutional change. Nonetheless, the following objectives from the Statement of Purpose and Belief are an important part of the ethos of Macalester, and we need to continue to explore ways to incorporate them into our educational program in ways that are demonstrable.

9. Students should be prepared to take responsibility for their personal, social, and intellectual choices.

10. Students should choose actions or beliefs for which they are willing to be held accountable.

11. Students should develop the ability to seek and use knowledge and experience in contexts that challenge and inform their suppositions about the world.

12. Students should grow intellectually and personally.

Resources for Assessment

Professor of Mathematics and Computer Science Danny Kaplan has accepted the position of Faculty Coordinator of Assessment (FCOA). Professor Kaplan has been instrumental in developing curricula that introduce to students to ways to develop their quantitative thinking skills in creative ways. He was instrumental in the implementation of a FIPSE grant that developed courses in a program called Quantitative Methods for Public Policy and has recently received a Keck Foundation grant to assess the effectiveness of a new introductory statistics curriculum designed to promote data fluency. A partial list of his responsibilities follows:

1. Working with faculty groups, with input from students and staff, to develop clear statements of goals for our broad curricular structures, such as general education graduation requirements, or themes of our academic program, such as urban engagement.
2. Coordinating interested faculty to develop approaches to providing ongoing feedback about how well we are accomplishing such goals and coordinating and monitoring implementation of these approaches.
3. Providing support to divisions, departments and programs in developing their own internal assessment, should they request such support.
4. Reviewing the college Assessment Plan and providing suggestions for improvements.

5. Staying apprised of assessment programs, efforts, and ideas, across the college in order to help support and disseminate information among departments and programs.
6. Developing an external network of faculty and institutional contacts at similar colleges to share strategies for effective assessment.
7. Coordinating Macalester faculty in their involvement in inter-college assessment activities.
8. Reporting to the Provost, and through her to the faculty, about progress, obstacles, and opportunities for assessment.

Associate Provost and Director of Institutional Research Dan Balik has accepted the position of Staff Assessment Coordinator (SAC). Mr. Balik has been involved with Institutional Research for 25 years and has been instrumental in the development of a receptive environment at the college for assessment and evaluation. A partial list of his responsibilities follows:

1. Establish sufficient clerical resources to support the data collection necessitated by the college Assessment Plan
2. Insure effective communication with the Institutional Research Office, the CST, and other college departments/programs that are involved in assessment activities
3. Provide support for the faculty Coordinator of Assessment in order to maximize the efforts of that person in implementing the college Assessment Plan
4. Develop an external network of institutional contacts at similar colleges to share strategies for effective assessment.

The role of the Macalester Assessment Steering Committee will be to advise the Provost, Faculty Assessment Coordinator, and the Staff Assessment Coordinator on matters of assessment, including: specifying student learning outcomes for assessment, identifying and designing assessment instruments, scheduling assessment cycles, analyzing assessment data, and recommending areas for improvement. The first, and perhaps most important, endeavor of MASC will be to develop a set of clear and specific student learning outcomes. The success of the entire assessment process depends on this very important first step. The outcomes should be developed through a collaborative process, they should be anchored in the core values, mission statement, and institutional objectives, and they should be collectively accepted. Once the learning outcomes have been developed, the Assessment Steering Committee will work with the FAC, SAC, and EPAG GE Steering Committees to identify or design tasks for assessing the dimensions of learning. The challenge here is to design assessment instruments and practices that

not only provide reliable and valid information, but also improve learning. An additional challenge at this stage is to reach consensus about criteria and standards of judgment. MASC will also determine appropriate timelines for assessment cycles and schedules for reporting of assessment results. MASC will analyze reports from institutional, departmental, and curricular assessments with the goal of improving 1) instruction, the curriculum, and administrative policies; 2) the coordination of efforts by the many different individuals and offices in the educational process; and 3) the assessment process itself.

The staffing need that has not yet been addressed is for a clerical support person (minimally .50 FTE) to provide the necessary backroom support for the numerous assessment tools that have suddenly sprung up as a result of the Teagle grant and the expected assessment of the proposed new graduation requirements including the general assessment instrument described in this plan. We expect that position to be allocated and funded for the start of the 2006-2007 academic year.

There is currently sufficient budget to support the assessment that is taking place now. There is a modest budget specifically for assessment controlled by the SAC, there is a large portion of the Institutional Research budget that is devoted to the annual surveys, and there is Macalester's share of the \$300,000 Teagle grant that was awarded to four colleges. We anticipate that these financial resources will be expanded as additional assessment efforts are initiated as described in Part 2 above.

Finally, the most valuable resource is the strong commitment to assessment held by President Rosenberg and Provost Michelfelder. They have been instrumental in renewing enthusiasm for the assessment effort, and their continued support will be essential for the ongoing improvements we intend to make.

APPENDIX A

Institutional Research Spring Survey Schedule

Year	Survey	Interval
1996	College Student Survey	n/a
1997	HEDS Senior Survey	2
1998	CSEQ	4
1999	College Student Survey	3
2000	HEDS Alumni, NSSE	5, n/a
2001	HEDS Senior Survey, NSSE	4, 1
2002	NSSE	1
2003	CSEQ	5
2004	College Student Survey	5
2005	HEDS Alumni, NSSE	5, 3
2006	HEDS Senior Survey	5
2007	CSEQ	4
2008	College Student Survey, NSSE	4, 3
2009	HEDS Senior Survey	3
2010	HEDS Alumni	5
2011	College Student Survey, NSSE	3, 3
2012	CSEQ	5