

# OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT UPDATE

Office of the Special Assistant to the VPAA for Outcomes Assessment  
206 Forman Center, [www.ric.edu/assessment](http://www.ric.edu/assessment) [assessment@ric.edu](mailto:assessment@ric.edu) (401) 456-9598

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

<i>New web site</i>	1
<i>Careers</i>	1
<i>CASO</i>	2
<i>Annual reports</i>	2
<i>General Education</i>	2
<i>Political Science</i>	3
<i>Colloquium</i>	3
<i>Assessment 101</i>	3
<i>Conferences</i>	4
<i>Research opportunities</i>	4

*Welcome to the first newsletter on outcomes assessment. The newsletter will be published once per semester providing updates, useful resources, and spotlights on department changes. Suggestions for topics are welcomed.*

## Web Site Updates

The Assessment / CASO web site was updated during the summer. It now contains many more useful resources, including information on: new faculty introduction to assessments; accreditation; general education assessment; reading lists (by topic); and forms and tem-

plates. The site also contains a list of all co-



curricular assessments and details on some assessments, including: Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA); College Portrait; and NSSE (National Survey of Student Engagement).

<http://www.ric.edu/assessment/>

## Focus on Careers

*Linking Outcomes Assessment to Careers.*

<http://www.bls.gov/ooih/>

The Occupational Outlook Handbook (OOH), published by the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, presents information on hundreds of occupations. The occupational information describes job tasks, work environment, educational requirements, compensation, and more. The hand-

book also contains employment projections for 2010 to 2020.

The OOH can be used to benchmark learning outcomes for academic programs. For example, for sociologists, the OOH lists the following skills as being important: analytical; communication; critical-thinking; problem-solving; and writing. For economists, OOH lists these skills: analytical; critical-

thinking; detail oriented; math; speaking; and writing. For social workers, OOH lists these skills: compassion; listening; organizational; interpersonal; problem-solving; and time-management.

Departments are encouraged to visit the OOH to review skill requirements and to compare these skills to their learning outcomes.

## CASO - The Committee on Assessment of Student

### Outcomes

The mission of CASO is to identify and evaluate the measures that will be used to assess achievement of College-wide goals, which are derived from the College Mission and the College Strategic Plan. CASO oversees outcomes assessment of curricular and co-curricular outcomes.

The primary means of assessment of curricular out-

comes are via General Education assessment and via program assessment.

Co-curricular outcomes are assessed via the Office of Student Life and via many other campus offices, frequently with the assistance of the Office of Institutional Research.

Specific tasks of CASO include reviewing department annual assessment

reports to determine a department's progress in evaluating the effectiveness of its curriculum.

CASO also reviews reports from student life to determine programs' impact on student outcomes, such as retention. In addition, CASO serves as resource for assessment information.

### Did You Know

*URI, CCRI, and hundreds of colleges and universities in the United States have assessment offices, and that accrediting bodies such as NEASC require institutions to have outcomes assessment programs.*

### What happens to departmental annual assessment reports?

Departmental annual assessment reports have multiple uses. For example, departments rely on them to determine whether curricular changes are warranted. Second, CASO

reviews them using a rubric to determine a department's stage in the assessment process (e.g., just beginning assessment or revamping a curriculum). Third, the RIBGHE

and NEASC review the reports to ensure the three state colleges are reviewing and updating their curriculum in meaningful ways.

### General Education

The design of the outcomes assessment plan for the new General Education curriculum is well under way. Last summer, a team of RIC faculty and staff attended the AAC&U Summer Institute on General Education and Assess-

ment in Maryland to begin crafting the plan. The team included: Shani Carter, Assistant to the VPAA for Student Outcomes Assessment; Joseph Zornado, Director of the FCTL; Praveena Gullapalli, Chair of the College's

Writing Board; Patricia Brennan, Faculty/Research Librarian, COGE; and Dan Weisman, Social Work, CASO. During the 2012-2013 year, COGE will create subcommittees to create the detailed assessment instruments.

## Focus on Departments: Political Science

Past assessment efforts. They have been conducting outcomes assessment for 5 years. All students were assessed on material covered in the three required introductory courses: POL 202 American Government; POL 203 Global Politics; and POL 204 Introduction to Political Thought.

Actions based on assessment results. Assessment spurred them to review their curriculum and to determine what kinds of changes should be made. For example, they added writing, research, and

methodology components to the curriculum. In addition, the NEASC self-study, the new General Education program, and changing to offering 4 credit courses led them to revise their curriculum and their assessment process.

Future assessment plans. Due to the curriculum change, they will create new assessment questions, with multiple choice and short essay questions. They are debating whether to have assessment tests or to have questions embedded in final exams. The

question is whether to measure short term learning or long term retention. They also want to measure alumni outcomes to determine their impact on the Rhode Island economy. The department wants to know what content it teaches effectively and how its efforts are reflected in the experience of its alumni i.e., the decision to attend graduate or law school or to enter a career that uses the knowledge and skills of the discipline.

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## Department Colloquium

Next spring, in conjunction with the FCTL, we will host the first RIC Outcomes Assessment Colloquium, similar to the colloquium that was held at URI last spring.

During the colloquium, departments will make brief presentations regarding their assessment programs and how their results have been used to inform their course offer-

ings. All departments will be invited to submit proposals. Details to follow later this semester.

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## Outcome Assessment for Newcomers

Employees who are new to RIC might be wondering what Outcomes Assessment is. Outcomes assessment seeks to answer the following questions:

- Are programs covering the material stated in their learning goals?

- How can programs evolve or improve?
- Are students learning the material the programs offer?
- What are the short term and long term impacts on students in regard to learning,

- retention, graduation, and post-graduation outcomes?
- How do all College programs interrelate in regard to accreditation, general education, academic programs, and co-curricular programs?

### *Did You Know*

*Graduate level programs also engage in outcomes assessment, and the Ph.D. program in Education at RIC/URI is updating its outcomes assessment process.*

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## Upcoming Conferences

There are many conferences offered throughout the year on outcomes assessment, many of which are held in New England. Funding to attend the NEEAN offices is available via the office of the VPAA, and funding may be available to attend other conferences, also. Send email to Shani Carter at [scarter@ric.edu](mailto:scarter@ric.edu) or at [assessment@ric.edu](mailto:assessment@ric.edu) to register for the NEEAN conferences.

### NEEAN

Fall Forum: Connecting with Incoming Students: Making the Transition Work.

Friday, Nov 2, 2012, College of the Holy Cross, Worcester, MA, 8:30 AM to 3:00 PM.

Dialogues:

March 22, 2013 at UMass, Amherst, MA.

Summer Institute:

June 6 & 7, 2013 at Keene State College, Keene, NH.

### AAC&U

Modeling Equity, Engaging Difference: New Frameworks for Diversity and Learning.

Baltimore, Maryland—October 18-20, 2012.

Annual Meeting: The Quality of U.S. Degrees: Innovations, Efficiencies, and Disruptions—To What Ends?

Atlanta, Georgia—January 23-26, 2013.

General Education and Assessment: A Sea Change in Student Learning.

Boston, Massachusetts—February 28-March 2, 2013.

Student Success and the Quality Agenda.

Miami, Florida—April 4-6, 2013.

### Council of Chief State School Officers

National Conference on Student Assessment (June)

[www.ccsso.org](http://www.ccsso.org)

### Texas A&M

Assessment Conference – (13th Annual) February 17-19, 2013

<http://assessment.tamu.edu/conference/>

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## Research opportunities

Many journals and newsletters publish articles exclusively focused on assessment, while others publish a broader range of topics, but also publish assessment research.

Check these journals' web sites for submission requirements. Faculty members are encouraged to publish reports on their outcomes assessment efforts. The RIC assessment web site has reading lists to get you started. [www.ric.edu/assessment/](http://www.ric.edu/assessment/)

- Academic Leader
- Academy of Management Learning and Education
- Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education
- Assessment Update
- Cambridge Journal of Education
- Community College Journal of Research & Practice
- Community College Review
- European Journal of Social Science
- Higher Education
- Higher Education Management & Policy
- Higher Education Quarterly
- Journal of Cooperative Education & Internships
- Journal of Higher Education
- New Directions for Community Colleges
- New Directions for Institutional Research
- New Directions for Higher Education
- Peer Review
- Public Relations Review
- Quality in Higher Education
- Research in Higher Education
- Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research