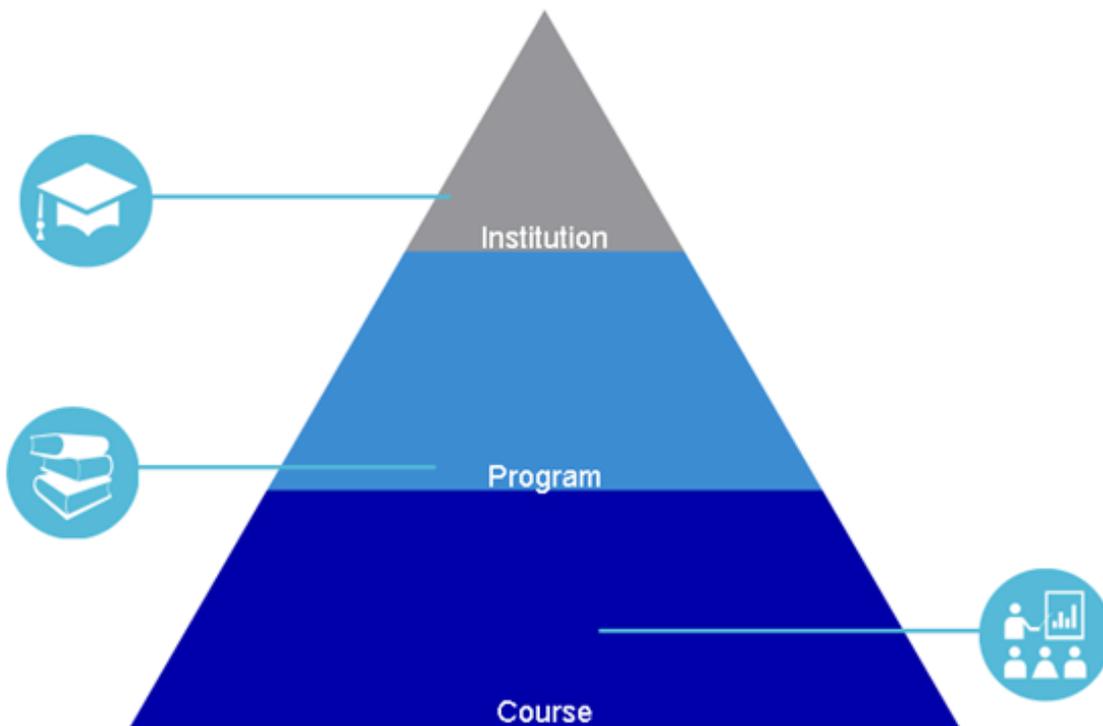


Assessment at MCLA

Resource Packet

Prepared for the Assessment Advisory Group, 2015-16



OUTCOMES



RATIONALE



LIBERAL ARTS



RESOURCES

mcla.edu/assessment

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Assessment Advisory Group

Charge

The Assessment Advisory Group ([AAG](#)) is an institutional body comprised of faculty and administrators that reviews institutional assessment procedures to determine their effectiveness and makes recommendations for changes to the President. In addition, it examines assessment data to determine the extent to which the institution is meeting its strategic goals.

Ongoing Goals

- To review the institutional assessment plan on a regular basis.
- To promote and support the LEAP goals.
- To review assessment procedures, including those for program review, core curriculum, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities that support student learning, and provide recommendations for improvement.
- To build capacity in assessment throughout the college
- To review the recommendations of its sub-groups and advise on action steps.
- To advise on linking assessment, planning, and resource allocation.
- To encourage the use of assessment results to enhance academic practices, student performance and institutional effectiveness.
- To promote a culture of evidence to support institutional goals.

Sub-Groups

Retention Task Force
ePortfolio Task Force

Membership History

*first year of membership

	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Biology/ATTR			Emily Mooney*	Emily Mooney	Emily Mooney	
Business Administration	Nancy Ovitsky*	Nancy Ovitsky	Nancy Ovitsky	Nancy Ovitsky	Tom Whalen*/ Jim Moriarty	Tom Whalen
Chemistry						Carolyn Dehner*
Computer Science		Mark Cohen*	Mark Cohen	Mark Cohen		
Education	Susan Edgerton*					
English Communications	David Langston*	David Langston	David Langston	David Langston		
Environmental Studies						
Fine & Performing Arts					Lisa Donovan	Lisa Donovan
History/PSPP	Kailai Huang*	Kailai Huang	Ely Janis	Ely Janis	Ely Janis	Ely Janis
PHIL/MODL/IDST					Rita Nnodim*	Rita Nnodim
Mathematics				Chris Thomas*	Chris Thomas	
Physics	Adrienne Wootters*	Adrienne Wootters	Adrienne Wootters	Adrienne Wootters	Adrienne Wootters	
Psychology						Ruby Vega*
Sociology						
Core – Creative Arts	Mark Miller*	Mark Miller	Mark Miller	Lisa Donovan*	Lisa Donovan	Lisa Donovan
Core – Human Heritage	Paul LeSage	Ely Janis*	Ely Janis	Ely Janis	Ely Janis	Ely Janis
Core – Self and Society	Bob Bence*	Bob Bence	Bob Bence		Ben Taylor*	Ben Taylor
Core – Science and Tech	Adrienne Wootters*	Adrienne Wootters	Emily Mooney	Emily Mooney	Emily Mooney	Carolyn Dehner
Core – Tier III				Adrienne Wootters	Rita Nnodim*	Rita Nnodim
Administrator – VP, Chair	Cindy Brown*	Cindy Brown	Cindy Brown	Cindy Brown		Cindy Brown
Administrator – AA	Monica Joslin*	Monica Joslin	Monica Joslin	Monica Joslin		Monica Joslin
Administrator – AA	Deb Foss*	Paul Lesage	Paul Lesage	Paul Lesage		
Administrator - AA	Kris Bendikas*	Kris Bendikas	Kris Bendikas	Kris Bendikas	Kris Bendikas	Kris Bendikas
Administrator - SA	Charlotte Degen*	Charlotte Degen	Charlotte Degen	Charlotte Degen	Theresa O'Bryant*	Theresa O'Bryant
Administrator - SA	Celia Norcross*	Celia Norcross	Celia Norcross	Celia Norcross	Celia Norcross	Celia Norcross
Student						
Staff Support	Jason Canales*	Jason Canales	Jason Canales	Jason Canales	Jason Canales	Erin Milne*

Assessment at MCLA

Institutional Level Outcomes

In support of our role as the Commonwealth's public liberal arts college, MCLA adopted the Liberal Education and America's Promise ([LEAP](#)) Essential Learning Outcomes from the Association of America Colleges and Universities ([AAC&U](#)) in 2008. The LEAP outcomes are infused throughout the curriculum and in co-curricular programs. Outcomes are assessed using faculty-developed [VALUE rubrics](#).

LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes

Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World

- Through study in the sciences and mathematics, social sciences, humanities, histories, languages, and the arts

Focused by engagement with big questions, both contemporary and enduring.

Intellectual and Practical Skills, Including

- Inquiry and analysis
- Critical and creative thinking
- Written and oral communication
- Quantitative literacy
- Information literacy
- Teamwork and problem solving

Practiced extensively, across the curriculum, in the context of progressively more challenging problems, projects, and standards for performance.

Personal and Social Responsibility, Including

- Civic knowledge and engagement—local and global
- Intercultural knowledge and competence
- Ethical reasoning and action
- Foundations and skills for lifelong learning

Anchored through active involvement with diverse communities and real-world challenges.

Integrative and Applied Learning, Including

- Synthesis and advanced accomplishment across general and specialized studies
- Demonstrated* through the application of knowledge, skills, and responsibilities to new settings and complex problems.

Outcomes Assessment at MCLA

MCLA has developed ongoing and systematic assessment processes at the institutional, program, and course levels to determine how our students are learning. The Assessment Advisory Group, a broadly representative body of faculty and staff, reviews and strengthens these processes.

Direct Assessments

Assessment is conducted in the Core Curriculum domains, in academic majors, and in co-curricular programs. Outcomes assessed include the LEAP outcomes, as well as program-specific outcomes. Most programs cycle through their outcomes over 2-3 years, assessing one learning outcome each semester. Different approaches used include using a Junior Qualifying Exam, ePortfolios, and holistic signature assignments. All approaches use *authentic assessment* - an examination of actual student work. Faculty members score the work, then come together at the end of the semester to review the results and discuss ways to use them to enhance learning. Chairs write a brief assessment report summarizing the work.

Assessment reports become part of the documentation required for [Program Review](#) and for institutional accreditation by [NEASC](#). The [Assessment Advisory Group](#) periodically reviews the reports and provides input on the strength of the process.

Indirect Assessments

MCLA also conducts indirect assessments of student learning and engagement through the National Survey of Student Engagement ([NSSE](#)). Its next administration will be in spring 2018. The results provide an estimate of how undergraduates spend their time and what they gain from attending college.

Survey items on NSSE represent empirically confirmed "good practices" in undergraduate education. That is, they reflect behaviors by students and institutions that are associated with desired outcomes of college. NSSE doesn't assess student learning directly, but survey results point to areas where colleges and universities are performing well and aspects of the undergraduate experience that could be improved.

In addition to the NSSE, MCLA surveys its alumni one year after graduation and again five years after graduation. The surveys ask graduates about their employment, community engagement and reflections on their time at MCLA.

Data from the survey is aggregated and shared appropriately with faculty, staff and students. It is used to make informed choices about pedagogy, curriculum and student services.

Levels of Assessment

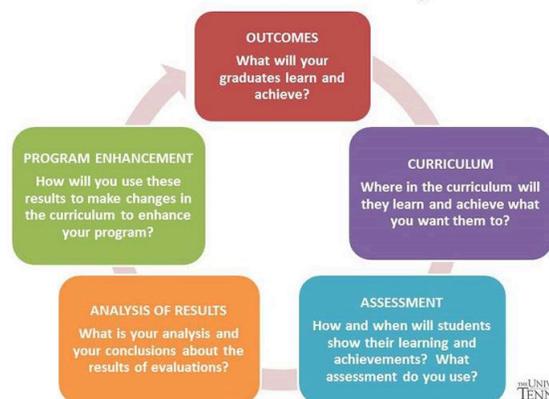
Assessment at MCLA occurs across multiple levels of programming.

Level	Learning Outcomes	Program Goals
Institutional (MCLA)	LEAP Essential Outcomes	Strategic Goals & MCLA Mission Statement
Divisional /Departmental	Outcomes at the Academic Program, Core, and Co-Curricular Levels	Divisional/Departmental Goals, Mission Statements, and Action Plans
Course/ Programmatic	Specific to content learned, measured by evidence of student learning	Specific to content offered, not necessarily tied directly to student learning

Assessment Cycle

At all levels, MCLA employs its assessment measures as part of an iterative, ongoing cycle, which is informed by and in turn helps inform its institutional mission and goals. Results are used for the purpose of improving programs and services provided to students.

The assessment cycle



(Source)

Accreditation & NEASC

MCLA Accreditation Cycle

MCLA prepares a comprehensive self-study every ten years as part of our reaccreditation by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC). MCLA's most recent self-study process culminated in a campus visit in November 2013 by a team of peer reviewers representing NEASC. Our self-study document benchmarked our progress, challenges, and opportunities relative to the 11 standards NEASC has outlined.

In 2018, MCLA will undergo a 5-year review from NEASC. In this check-in, NEASC will be particularly focused on finding indicators of improvement in the following areas:

- Information Literacy
- Developing a multi-year financial plan

Updates to NEASC Standards for Accreditation

In 2015, NEASC released a [draft of updates to its Standards for Accreditation](#), the benchmarks by which MCLA's institutional effectiveness is measured. Trends in changes include inclusion of competency-based education, inclusion of faculty and staff into a single stakeholder group, and a renewed importance for accreditation standards to be met within program offerings rather than as standalone entities. For an annotated version of all the changes to the standards from the 2011 iteration, please [click here](#).

Assessment

Assessment, formerly spread throughout the NEASC Standards and concentrated mostly in Standard 4: The Academic Program, now has its own highlighted standard. Most changes in language reflect an increased importance on validity, usefulness, and public transparency in assessment processes. Additionally, it makes clear that college staff as well as faculty are to be active participants in the assessment process.

Assessment in the 2015 NEASC Standards for Accreditation (Draft)

STANDARD EIGHT: Educational Effectiveness: Based on verifiable information, the institution understands what its students have gained as a result of their education and has useful evidence about the success of its recent graduates. This information is used for planning and improvement, resource allocation and to inform the public about the institution. Student achievement is at a level appropriate for the degree awarded.

Information Literacy

The 2015 Draft of the NEASC Standards for Accreditation is maintaining an emphasis on the importance of Information Literacy, while at the same time making it increasingly clear that Information Literacy is meant to be a pivotal component of each academic program, rather than a standalone service contained only in a library.

Information Literacy in the 2015 NEASC Standards for Accreditation (Draft)

4.12 Expectations for student achievement, independent learning, information literacy, skills in inquiry, and critical judgment are appropriate to the subject matter and degree level and in keeping with generally accepted practice.

4.15 Graduates successfully completing an undergraduate program demonstrate... the capability for continuing learning, including the skills of information literacy....

4.19 ... Requirements for the major or area of concentration are based upon clear and articulated learning objectives, including a mastery of the knowledge, information resources, methods, and theories pertinent to a particular area of inquiry....

7.22 The institution uses information technology sufficient to ensure its efficient ability to plan, administer, and evaluate its program and services. It provides access to library and information resources sufficient to support its teaching and learning environments and its research and public service mission as appropriate.

State & Federal Assessment Initiatives

Assessment Initiatives in Massachusetts

The Vision Project

The [Vision Project](#) provides the framework for system-wide and campus-level activity in seven key outcome areas in which Massachusetts seeks to be a leader among state systems of higher education.

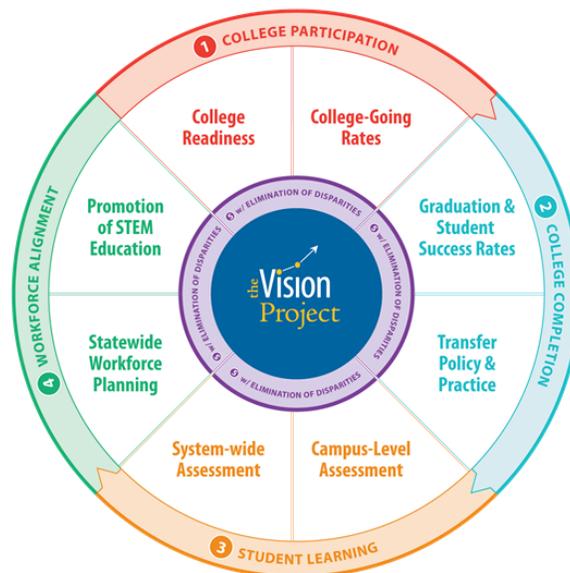
The Vision

We will produce the best-educated citizenry and workforce in the nation.

We will be a national leader in research that drives economic development.

Key Outcomes

- **College Participation** - Raising the percentage of high school graduates going to college—and the readiness of these students for college-level work.
- **College Completion** - Increasing the percentage of students who complete degree and certificate programs.
- **Student Learning** - Achieving higher levels of student learning through better assessment and more extensive use of assessment results.
- **Workforce Alignment** - Aligning occupationally oriented degree and certificate programs with the needs of statewide, regional and local employers.
- **Preparing Citizens** - Providing students with the knowledge, skills and dispositions to be active, informed citizens.
- **Elimination of Disparities** - Closing achievement gaps among students from different ethnic, racial, gender and income groups in all areas of educational progress.
- **Research (UMass Campuses Only)** - Conducting research that drives economic development



The Annual Report

To hold ourselves accountable for achieving national leadership on these key outcomes, The Vision Project issues an annual report to the people of the state, comparing our work to that of our peer institutions in other states.

Advancing a Massachusetts Culture of Assessment (AMCOA)

Advancing a Massachusetts Culture of Assessment ([AMCOA](#)) is a team of faculty and staff from each of the 28 undergraduate campuses with a goal of helping every campus improve curriculum and learning through development of state-of-the-art programs of learning outcomes assessment.

MCLA has been represented at AMCOA meetings and conferences by David Langston (English), Mark Cohen (Computer Science) and Kris Bendikas. Going forward, Erin Milne will represent the staff of MCLA, and we are looking for one or more faculty representatives.

Multi-State Collaborative to Advance Learning Outcomes Assessment (MSC)

With the active support of the association of State Higher Education Executive Officers ([SHEEO](#)) and the Association of American Colleges and Universities ([AAC&U](#)), nine states —Connecticut, Indiana, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, Oregon, Rhode Island and Utah — have agreed to collaborate in the development and pilot testing of a different model for learning outcomes assessment — a model that is rooted in campus/system collaboration and in faculty curriculum development, teaching activity, and assessment of authentic student work. The model is based on the use of Essential Learning Outcomes and associated VALUE rubrics developed by faculty members under the auspices of AAC&U's LEAP initiative.

In Massachusetts the suggestion for [multi-state assessment](#) came from the response of the Working Group on Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment to DHE Commissioner Richard Freeland's charge to include Student Learning in the Vision Project in a manner that builds on strong campus assessment and also provides for accountability to external audiences. The LEAP State Initiative was designed to allow campuses and the DHE in Massachusetts to develop and pilot test a model for statewide assessment and to encourage other states to join in the work through the Multi-State Collaborative.

MCLA is not taking part in the pilot, but is participating in the project through representation on the Massachusetts Team (Kris Bendikas) and the Taskforce (Monica Joslin), whose members work to develop processes and protocols for the assessment.

Metrics of Student Learning

- Pass rates on a broad range of professional licensure tests, with national comparisons.
- Performance on a broad range of graduate school entrance examinations, with national comparisons.
- Other assessments of learning to be recommended, to be determined.

Assessment & Federal Policy

MCLA is a member of the Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges ([COPLAC](#)) and the [American Association of State Colleges and Universities](#) as well as the American Association of Colleges and Universities ([AAC&U](#)). These organizations provide advocacy support and information about issues that are of interest and concern at a national level. MCLA continually monitors developments at the federal level that may impact its assessment processes and policies. A few of these are listed below.

The College Scorecard & Federal College Rating System

The [scorecard](#) provides data to students and parents about college affordability. Its key indicators are Cost, Graduation Rate, Loan default Rate, Median Borrowing and Employment. The federal government would like employment to show the average earnings of former undergraduates, but has not finalized the formula. The first edition of the College Scorecard was released in September of 2015. This scorecard may eventually be integrated with a [Federal College Rating System](#), and may be tied to federal student aid dollars by 2018.

Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers ([PARCC](#))

PARCC is a group of states working together to develop a set of assessments that measure whether students are on track to be successful in college and their careers. These computer-based K–12 assessments in Mathematics and English Language Arts/Literacy give teachers, schools, students, and parents information whether students are on track in their learning and for success after high school, and tools to help teachers customize learning to meet student needs. The PARCC assessments completed their second of two years of pilot testing during the 2014-15 school year. The state of Massachusetts is currently using these results to explore whether to continue with PARCC testing, or to return to the MCAS assessment system. If Massachusetts continues with the nationwide assessment, students who have taken the PARCC assessments will be entering MCLA as freshmen in fall 2018.

The Higher Education Act ([HEA](#))

The HEA is a broad act that covers federal financial aid programs and the requirements for receiving aid. Currently it is on an extension, after expiring in 2013, while [the houses of Congress work on overhauling its language](#). The funding for colleges and universities that the HEA authorizes is frequently raised as a possible leverage to use with institutions to require additional reporting of outcomes, greater transparency, or other requirements.

Assessment Resources

Institutional Research, Assessment and Planning Contact Information

Kristina Bendikas, Associate Dean of Academic Affairs

K.Bendikas@mcla.edu, Bowman Hall, x. 5526

Erin Milne, Director of Assessment

Erin.Milne@mcla.edu, Eldridge Hall B02A, x. 5049

Jason Canales, Institutional Research Analyst

Jason.Canales@mcla.edu, Eldridge Hall B02B, x. 5413

MCLA Assessment Website

The office of Institutional Research, Assessment and Planning maintains a web presence with multiple pages of information about assessment, professional development opportunities, readings, and links to other resources. The assessment web page is under active construction as we seek to incorporate resources for developing and using assessment in all areas of the collegiate experience. Please visit mcla.edu/assessment for more.

Sample Curriculum Map

For each course which addresses a Program Learning Outcome, detail how the outcome will be assessed.

Program Learning Outcomes		1	2	3	4
Course #	Course Title	1. Students will be able to demonstrate knowledge of basic principles and theories in analytical, organic and inorganic and physical chemistry.	2. Students will be able to apply chemical principles through problem solving and laboratory experimentation.	3. Students will be able to demonstrate competency in use of various laboratory instruments.	4. Students should be able to retain knowledge and skills learned in previous courses.
150	Introduction to Chemistry I				
201	Organic Chemistry I				
202	Organic Chemistry II				
250	Inorganic Chemistry				
301	Physical Chemistry I				
302	Physical Chemistry II				
395	Special Topics in Chemistry				

Program Assessment Report Template

Program:

Outcome Measured: *(whichever one you chose)*

What assessment process was used?

(A very brief description. For example, "The outcome was measured by essay assignments, given in two senior level classes")

What were the findings?

(This should be a wrap-up and interpretation of the assessment results by the program faculty – not just the faculty where the assessments took place. Include numbers where they help clarify the results. Most importantly, what do the results tell you about how well the student learned? What were the areas of strengths and weaknesses?)

How does the domain plan to use the results?

(Do the results indicate what learning could be improved? You probably won't get any results that call for radical changes, but what small step might the program faculty take to help improve student learning of the outcome measured? This is a key question that needs to be addressed.)

What change (if any) needs to be made to the assessment process?

(Does anything need to be amended? Maybe one question on a questionnaire confused the respondents and needs to be rewritten. Maybe the assignment didn't turn out to be a good way to measure that outcome. If you got useful information then the process is working!)

What outcome will be assessed next (Fall 2013, Spring 2014)?

(What outcome, how will it be measured – e.g. existing assignment, final exam question... and where ...)

Administrative Feedback

(I will provide written feedback for your reference.)

Don't forget to:

*Attach the rubric/scoring guide/grading criteria used to assess this outcome.

Assessment Acronyms in Higher Education

Accreditation Organizations

AAHEA	American Association for Higher Education and Accreditation
CAATE	Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education
NEASC	New England Association of Schools and Colleges

Assessment & Learning Outcomes Organizations

AAG	Assessment Advisory Group (MCLA)
CAS	Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education
LEAP	Liberal Education America's Promise (AAC&U)
NEEAN	New England Educational Assessment Network
NILOA	National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment

Institutional Research Organizations

AIR	Association for Institutional Research
CIRP	Cooperative Institutional Research Program
IPEDS	Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System
NEAIR	North East Association for Institutional Research
NCES	National Center for Education Statistics
NSC	National Student Clearinghouse
NSSE	National Survey of Student Engagement

Institutional Professional Organizations

AAC&U	American Association of College and Universities
AASCU	American Association of State Colleges and Universities
APLU	Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities
CGS	Council of Graduate Schools
CHEA	Council for Higher Education Accreditation
COPLAC	Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges
SOTL	Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

Journals & Publications

Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education	Journal of Higher Education
Assessment in Higher Education	New England Journal of Education
Assessment Update	Quality in Higher Education
Chronicle of Higher Education	Research in Higher Education
Higher Education Policy	Teaching in Higher Education
Inside Higher Education	Thought and Action

State/Federal Initiatives

AMCOA	Advancing a Massachusetts Culture of Assessment (Vision Project)
DHE	Massachusetts Department of Higher Education
MSC	Multi-State Collaborative to Advance Learning Outcomes Assessment
PARCC	Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Career
SHEEO	State Higher Education Executive Officers Association
Vision Project	Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Career

Student Affairs Professional Organizations

ACPA	American College Personnel Association
NASPA	Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education
NSEE	The National Society for Experiential Education
NSLC	National Service-Learning Clearinghouse