

ASSESSMENT OF GENERAL EDUCATION:

How Accreditation-Forced Assessment Led to Real Change

The Spalding University Case Study



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Introducing Ourselves

□ **Dr. Lynn Gillette**

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- Former Vice President for Business, Administration and Compliance at Spalding University
- Service on over ten SACS accreditation site-visit teams
- PhD in Economics from Texas A&M University

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- Assistant Provost/Assistant Vice President of Academic Affairs at Sierra Nevada College and Co-Chair of the Institutional Effectiveness Committee
- Member of the Executive Team in charge of the SNC's recent self-study and full-scale evaluation visit from the NWCCU
- Former Director of Academic Records Technology at University of La Verne
- M.A. and A.B.D in Women's Studies in Religion at Claremont Graduate University

Learning Objectives

- LEARNING OBJECTIVE ONE: How to **use accreditation** to drive the development of meaningful assessment

- LEARNING OBJECTIVE TWO: How to develop **meaningful assessment** of general education

The Case Study: Spalding University

- While at Spalding University, Dr. Gillette successfully led institutional efforts to create a comprehensive general education assessment system. This effort was instrumental in the reaffirmation of their accreditation from the Southern Association of College and Schools (SACS)
- The majority of this presentation will look at how that assessment system was established in response to accreditation pressure and how it was then used to create meaningful change in the general education curriculum.
- The presentation will conclude with some closing remarks about how a similar process of creating general education assessment system in response to accreditation compliance is underway at Sierra Nevada College

Spalding University Facts

- Carnegie Classification:
Doctoral/Research University
- Founded in 1814
- Spalding offers two degree programs at the associate level, twelve degree programs at the baccalaureate level, eight degree programs at the masters level, and two degree programs at the doctoral level.

Spalding Enrollment Data (Fall 2006)

- Headcount 1706
 - Undergraduate 990 (58%)
 - Graduate 716 (42%)

- Female 1271 (75%)
- Male 435 (25%)

- African American (22%)
- White, Non-Hispanic (78%)

Spalding Programs

❑ Traditional Undergraduate Day Program

- Six-week session calendar
- Students meet four days per week, 100 minutes per day, for a total of 2400 minutes of class contact for a 3-hour course (exceeds 2250 minutes for a typical 15-week semester course).

❑ Adult Accelerated Program (AAP)

- Students meet four hours per week for five weeks with a final two-hour class for the sixth week.

Using Accreditation: Assess Your Situation

- 1996 SACS Visit to Spalding University resulted in 4 recommendations related to Institutional Effectiveness.
- Dr. Jo Ann Rooney became President of Spalding University in August 2002. The President and senior team took significant strategic steps to improve Institutional Effectiveness.
 - February 2003, 20 programs were eliminated along with 22 faculty positions.
 - August of 2004, Dr. Gillette was hired to direct institutional effectiveness and achieve successful SACS reaffirmation of accreditation
- The President and senior team were committed to a successful reaffirmation of accreditation in 2006, as well as to using that visit to improve the institution.

Using Accreditation: Learn the Rules

- **SACS Comprehensive Standard 3.5.1**
 - The institution identifies college-level competencies within the general education core and provides evidence that graduates have attained those competencies.

Using Accreditation: Take Stock

- ❑ Two years before the visit, some work existed from 1996 with some habits of heart and mind identified as key elements for assessment and with some previous assessment experience.
- ❑ No clearly identified set of college-level competencies existed within the general education core.
- ❑ There was a lack of ownership of general education.
- ❑ There were no current assessment processes.
- ❑ Little, to no, documentation.

Using Accreditation: Tap Your Infrastructure

- The Senior VP of Academic Affairs appointed a Subcommittee from the Curriculum Committee and asked Dr. Gillette to lead the committee.
- Dr. Gillette was also asked to lead the Council on Institutional Effectiveness (CIE). This committee included faculty members from each college at Spalding along with two other members from the administration/staff for the following purpose:
 - review the assessment plans of the University to assure the regularity of assessment
 - review reports from all units regarding the use of the results of assessments
 - recommend review of academic programs to the Curriculum Committee
 - Review at least one written report per year from each school on the results of their ongoing assessment efforts

Using Accreditation: Develop Goals and Tactics

- **The objective of the Subcommittee was to get the University compliant with rule 3.5.1.**
- **Achieving the objective required the following:**
 - Quick action since the SACS visit was only two years away
 - To process everything in order to gain faculty ownership.
 - To follow university governance procedures.
 - To identify college-level competencies.
 - To increase credibility through the use a nationally-normed test.
 - To use multiple means of assessment for each competency. (Nationally-normed, course embedded, student surveys, faculty surveys.)

Using Accreditation: Define the Process

- The subcommittee of the Curriculum Committee drove the process.
- The Senior VP of Academic Affairs worked with the Curriculum Committee, the Deans and Chairs, and ultimately the Faculty Senate to facilitate the process.
- The Council on Institutional Effectiveness played a significant role in supporting the use of the Academic Profile and in determining how we would present all assessment reports.

Using Accreditation: Enlist Your Leaders

- The leadership of the President and the Senior VP of Academic Affairs was crucial.
- They consistently sent a strong message about how important assessment was to faculty, administration and even the Board of Trustees.
- This message about the important role that assessment would play in institutional success, both in terms of accreditation and beyond, was critical to our success.

Using Accreditation: Communicate Urgency

- In early January 2005 after the SACS annual conference, Dr. Gillette presented a SACS 101 workshop for the entire university faculty and staff. The four-hour workshop addressed:
 - The new principles of Accreditation and the new process.
 - Assessment in detail, especially general education, with reference to the work of the subcommittee.
 - A cabinet internal audit of all Principles of Accreditation and a candid presentation of the biggest problem areas.
 - The consequences of a poor Compliance Certification
- The SACS 101 workshop was crucial in educating the faculty and staff and in establishing a sense of urgency and a sense of competence.

Using Accreditation: Summary

- **Accreditation can be helpful in driving the assessment process because of the following:**
 - Accreditation provides a timeframe for completing tasks
 - Accreditation standards provide rules/parameters for defining where to start and what it takes to be successful.
 - Accreditation provides the perfect opportunity to take stock of your institution's assessment history and the current state of assessment at the institution.

- **To use accreditation to successfully drive assessment, you may want to consider the following strategies:**
 - Using your existing governance structure to define the process
 - Tapping your existing governance infrastructure as you set goals and develop tactics
 - Enlisting the support of your executive leadership
 - Communicating about assessment and accreditation to create a sense of urgency among all stakeholders, from staff to trustees.



Meaningful Change: From Urgency to Effectiveness

- ❑ **Once you have created a sense of urgency it is important to translate that energy into change that will last beyond the accreditation visit.**
- ❑ **This means the work that is done for accreditation purposes must fit in with the institutional mission, it must have the support of faculty and administration and it must be embedded in the existing structures of the institution.**
- ❑ **In order for change to remain meaningful, both in terms of staying power and significance of outcomes, changes must also be effective in meeting institutional goals.**

Meaningful Change: The GE at Spalding

University Studies (55 semester hours)

- Communication (12 semester hours)
- Humanities (15 semester hours)
- Natural Sciences and Mathematics (9 semester hours)
- Religious Studies (6 semester hours)
- Social Sciences (12 semester hours)
- University Studies (1 semester hour)

Meaningful Change: Mission Consistency

“To graduate with a bachelor degree, Spalding University requires undergraduate students to fulfill 55 credit hours in the humanities, natural sciences and mathematics, social sciences, religious studies, and communication. These general education requirements comprise the University Studies component of all undergraduate degree programs. In keeping with Spalding University’s long tradition, rigorous study across and within the academic disciplines fosters commitment to life-long learning, service, and the promotion of peace and justice among students and faculty. University Studies courses are designed to give students opportunities to practice habits of mind and heart that emphasize the joy of discovery, animate the creative intellect, and promote the development of personal and intellectual competencies needed for success in any chosen profession.”

Meaningful Change: From Mission to Measurement

- From this statement, the following specific competencies were developed:
 - Think critically;
 - Communicate effectively using oral, visual, and written skills;
 - Comprehend social issues from different perspectives such as literary, artistic, historical, cultural, philosophical, scientific, global, political, technological, and economic;
 - Use scientific and mathematical skills to solve problems;
 - Demonstrate effective interpersonal skills; and
 - Understand one's personal values and religious beliefs and respect those of others.

Meaningful Change: Measuring Competencies

- ❑ The Measure of Academic Proficiency and Progress (MAPP) test is a measure of college-level reading, mathematics, writing, and critical thinking in the context of the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. The MAPP test is designed for colleges and universities to assess their general education outcomes, so they may improve the quality of instruction and learning.
- ❑ It focuses on the academic *skills* developed through general education courses, rather than on the *knowledge* acquired about the subjects taught in these courses.

Meaningful Change: Measuring Competencies

- The MAPP yields eight norm-referenced scores:
 1. Humanities
 2. Social Sciences
 3. Natural Sciences
 4. College-Level Reading
 5. College-Level Writing
 6. Critical Thinking
 7. Mathematics
 8. Total Score

- In addition to the norm-referenced scores, three criterion-referenced proficiency level scores are reported for three skill areas:
 1. Writing
 2. Mathematics
 3. Reading/Critical Thinking

- Given the emphasis in the Spalding University Studies program on rigorous work across disciplines, this nationally-normed test was a good fit with the philosophy of the GE.

Meaningful Change: Collecting Data

- The MAPP was given at Spalding as both a pre-test (freshmen) and a post-test (juniors)
 - MAPP testing was performed on freshman in the required, one-unit University Studies Course. Students had to take the MAPP to pass the course.
 - All Juniors were also given the test during their third year of study
 - Students that scored at the 90th percentile or higher compared to all juniors nationally are designated as University Studies Scholars. They receive a letter and certificate from the President and they are listed as a University Studies Scholar in the official commencement program. This helped encourage student effort on the test and makes it meaningful from a student perspective.



Meaningful Change: Communicating Results

- A critical element in embedding assessment in the culture of an institution is to communicate the results broadly, consistently and accessibly.
- During the fall and winter of 2005 as the subcommittee of the Curriculum Committee worked on general education assessment, the Council on Institutional Effectiveness (CIE) worked on how we would present each unit's assessment results.
- Spalding adopted the Nichols five-column model.

Meaningful Change: The Five Column Model

- The Five-Column Model provided a consistent, accessible format that allowed for easy communication of results.

| | | | | |
|------|-------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| Goal | Intended Outcomes | Assessment Procedures and Criteria | Assessment Results | Use of Results |
|------|-------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------|----------------|

- The Goals came from the Strategic Plan, which tied to the mission.
- The CIE reviewed and revised, as needed, all five-column models for quality assurance.

Meaningful Change: Five-Column Model Sample

- Benefits of the Five Column Model in producing Assessment Reports
 - Clear and easy to read. Consistent and accessible for Accreditation and campus communication purposes
 - Goals Tied to Strategic Plan, which was tied to Mission (Column 1)
 - Includes an operational definition and intended outcome (Column 3).
 - Includes results (Column 4)
 - Includes use of results, proof of “closing the loop” (Column 5)
 - Written to refer to multiple means of assessment
 - Nationally-normed tests, MAPP. Norm-referenced and proficiency level scores.
 - Broad criteria and then minimum for majors.
 - Student surveys: Graduating Student Survey and some in class as with Religious Studies.
 - Faculty surveys: all faculty teaching 300-500 classes.
 - Course embedded assessments.
 - ETS MAPP Essay

Meaningful Change: Addressing Results

- Results of MAPP testing showed that Spalding students were lower than the national average in Critical Thinking and Math Skills
 - The results of the MAPP were widely communicated to faculty. The assessment data demanded a response.
 - A Quality Enhancement Proposal (QEP) was developed to address this deficiency.
 - This proposal led to strengthening the general education mathematics requirement.
 - The data led to additional resources being allocated to the Academic Resource Center and to math tutoring.

Meaningful Change: Designing A Solution

- Creation of a new mathematics course, Intermediate Concepts in Algebra (Math 104)
- Course includes enhanced features for the achievement of student learning outcomes, including a highly interactive style of instruction.
 - experiential activities
 - student groups
 - computer-assisted instruction
 - low student/faculty ratio (20 students or fewer)
 - expanded contact hours
 - a teaching assistant in the classroom with the instructor
 - tutoring
- At Spalding courses are taught in the six-week session format, which allows the student to focus on only one or two courses at a time. For Math 104, students may only take this one course during a given six-week session allowing them to focus.
- Each Friday is allocated towards assessment of student competence in the selected (1 of 6) modules for the specific week.

Meaningful Change: Ultimate Outcomes

- ❑ Spalding was successful in its bid to reaffirm accreditation with SACS. There were no recommendations in the area of Institutional Effectiveness.
- ❑ The assessment process described in this presentation is still functioning effectively in a post-accreditation environment.
- ❑ Real, meaningful curricular changes were made as a result of the collection, communication and analysis of assessment data.

Repeatable Results?: Sierra Nevada College

- ❑ Sierra Nevada College is currently in the process of designing a campus-wide assessment system that will also address the newly adopted CORE curriculum.
- ❑ The Sierra Nevada College is tied to accreditation through a recommendation from the NWCCU in our recent Full-Scale Evaluation Report that encourages us to continue to improve our assessment methods, especially in terms of use of results.
- ❑ As a result of this recommendation, the Provost/Vice President of Academic Affairs has formed an Institutional Effectiveness Committee to guide the development of assessment plans for each academic department and the CORE curriculum.
- ❑ The Five-Column Model is being used as the standard format for these plans.
- ❑ The process is in its early stages and departments have only recently completed the first three columns of the assessment plan. Data collection has begun, but no action is likely to be taken on this information before the start of the Fall 2008 term.

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Questions?