MONITORING REPORT ON PROGRAM REVIEW AND ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES
AT KNOX COLLEGE
SUBMITTED TO THE HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION
30 April 2013

Organization of the Report

Introduction

Background: Institutionalizing Assessment at Knox College

Responding to the Requirements of the Higher Learning Commission Monitoring Report

I.   **Development of Learning Goals: Academic Programs and Courses**
II.   **Majors and Minors: Assessment within Academic Programs**
III.   **Formal Program Reviews**
IV.   **Assessment Beyond Majors and Minors**
       College-wide Learning Goals
       College-wide Programs
         "Foundation" Learning Goals
         First-Year Preceptorial
         The Honor Code
         College Honors Program
         New Student Orientation

Building the Culture of Assessment: 2012-2013 and Beyond

Organizational Structure for Assessment at Knox College

Appendices

1. **Timeline for Assessment Activities, 2010-present**
2. **Curriculum Committee New Course Approval Form**
3. **Assessment Planning Report**
4. **Assessment Progress Report**
5. **List of Programs for Assessment and Formal Review**
6. **Knox College Program Review Guide, 4th revised edition**
7. **Assessment Plan for Knox Graduation Requirements**
8. **Assessment Calendar through 2019: Requirements for Graduation, Other Requirements and Special Programs of the College**
9. **Foundation Learning Goals**
10. **2012 Writing Rubric FP**
11. **2012 FP Assessment Report**

MONITORING REPORT ON PROGRAM REVIEW AND ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES SUBMITTED TO THE HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION BY KNOX COLLEGE

INTRODUCTION

On April 19, 2010, the Higher Learning Commission notified Knox College of its continued accreditation for the maximum 10-year period. The HLC Statement of Affiliation Status noted that a monitoring report "…on program review and student learning outcomes" was required by April 30, 2013. The required monitoring report was based in the Assurance Section of the Report of a Comprehensive Visit to Knox College, November 2-4, 2009 (hereafter referred to as the HLC Assurance Report), which identified the nascent state of academic assessment at that time:

> In general, the departmental self-studies submitted in 2009 can best be characterized as having more in common with a typical program analysis than with assessment, which usually refers to assessment of learning outcomes. Most departments (or programs like the First-Year Preceptorial) presented a listing of departmental goals, although some of these goals are more readily assessable than others. A number of departments had barely moved beyond identifying goals and had not yet identified how the goals would be assessed, while a few had selected instruments for assessing learning outcomes and had produced some limited results. Carrying out these assessment activities, however, were so recent that in most cases meaningful analysis had not yet taken place, and it is too soon to have any feedback on any changes that have been made as a result of assessment. Further, there was no evidence that any of the departments had set criteria for success. The conclusion is therefore that assessment at Knox is indeed still in its infancy. (page 15)

Since that time, Knox College has made significant strides in assessment across the institution. This report provides Knox's responses to the 2010 HLC accreditation stipulation and documents progress made since that time. After providing a brief history of assessment at Knox, this report provides an update on the major areas of Knox's assessment initiative: Implementa-

2

tion of course learning goals and assessment within our academic programs, periodic academic program reviews, and assessment in academic programs beyond our majors and minors.

BACKGROUND: INSTITUTIONALIZING ASSESSMENT AT KNOX COLLEGE

At the time that the College began to prepare its self-study in anticipation of the 2009 Accreditation visit, Knox College was just beginning to incorporate assessment into its learning and teaching culture. In 2005, Knox launched one of its first coordinated assessment activities through the college's participation in an Associated Colleges of the Midwest Teagle Foundation-supported project on assessment. In 2007, Knox's Office of Institutional Research and Assessment was newly created through a Department of Education Title III Grant. In August of 2009, following the appointment of a Director of Institutional Research and after a lengthy national search, the Associate Director for Assessment Support began work at the college.

With the appointment of the Associate Director for Assessment Support, Knox built on the momentum started with the Teagle project, which had involved four academic departments in developing assessment plans. In academic year 2009-2010, Knox College established the Assessment Advisory Group (AAG), chaired by the Associate Dean of the College, a humanities faculty member. In addition to the Registrar, and the Associate Director for Assessment Support, four other faculty were appointed (a member of the science faculty who would coordinate work in general education; an historian who would coordinate program reviews, and a social scientist and a mathematician serving as two at-large members. (In fall of 2011, an arts faculty was added to the AAG.) Accomplishments for 2009-2010 included:

- establishment of a formal program review process, which would begin in Fall of 2010
- development of both a Program Review Guide and an Assessment Guide

- a web presence for assessment, and
- faculty workshops on the development of program goals.

During the summer of 2010, AAG members attended the HLC's Assessment Workshop at Lisle IL. In addition to providing the AAG members a stronger background in assessment, this workshop enabled the AAG to more fully develop its vision for assessment at Knox and to develop a first draft of the College's learning goals. The intensive nature of the Lisle experience also was critical in bringing the faculty members of the AAG together as an effective working group.

As a result of both their accomplishments during academic year 2009-2010 and their experiences at Lisle, when the Associate Director for Assessment Support left the college for another position in August of 2010, the AAG was more than capable of providing leadership in assessment.

During the 2010-2011 academic year, the AAG was able to accomplish the following:

- successfully implement assessment reporting across the College (as evidenced by the submission of learning goals and assessment activities from nearly all academic departments and programs)
- initiate deliberations in two of the Foundation areas[1] regarding the development of learning goals for these particular graduation requirements
- complete the first year of the seven-year cycle of formal program review process, and
- develop and demonstrate strong faculty leadership in assessment.

Based on the College's experiences, the AAG recommended that position of Associate Director for Academic Assessment Support be re-defined as Director of Assessment and report directly to the Dean of the College. In May 2011, the new Director of Assessment was appointed and began to provide leadership for the assessment momentum that had begun.

---

[1] Knox's general education program is anchored by a set of Foundation requirements through which students complete a First-Year Preceptorial seminar in their first term and subsequently take a specially designated course in each of the four broad areas of the curriculum: Arts, Humanities, History and Social Science and Mathematics and Natural Science.

RESPONDING TO THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION MONITORING REPORT

In the HLC Assurance Report, the Higher Learning Commission outlined specific expectations for Knox College with regard to assessment and program review. *Appendix 1 provides a summary of (a) the requirements and expectations to demonstrate substantial progress in assessment as stipulated in the HLC Assurance Report and (b) the record of Knox practices and projects implemented since 2010 in each of those areas*. What follows below is a narrative account that explains how each of those practices and projects was organized and implemented in order to advance continuous assessment of learning at Knox College.

I. DEVELOPMENT OF LEARNING GOALS: ACADEMIC PROGRAMS AND COURSES

While the articulation and usefulness of learning goals was a new idea for some faculty, most had no trouble recognizing the role and value of establishing **learning goals within courses**. In fact, the initial assessment workshops (described below) began by discussing learning goals within the context of individual courses. In response to the ease with which most faculty understood learning goals in that context, during 2011-12 the faculty's Curriculum Committee, which has the authority to approve the introduction of new courses into the curriculum, changed its course proposal procedures to require faculty to indicate the proposed learning goals, along with other information (e.g., potential reading lists, topic lists, etc.) in support a proposal for a new course. The Curriculum Committee introduced this process through its solicitation of new courses for Knox's first-year seminar program (called, First-Year Preceptorial—see section IV) and then broadened the requirement for proposals for any new course (see Appendix 2). While not all Knox syllabi include the course learning goals on the syllabus, this practice is continuing to grow. In the winter 2013, the Faculty Personnel Committee began a review of the stu-

dent course evaluation form used across all departments, a project that will likely lead to a revision which will explicitly link student evaluations to learning goals associated with each course.

Through the earlier Teagle Grant (which enabled four participating departments to complete assessment projects) and subsequent institutional self-study, Knox made preliminary forays into the development of continuous and ongoing assessment at the program level. As part of the re-accreditation self-study process, Knox had requested that departments develop **learning goals for their respective majors and minors.** The result of this initial effort was mixed, as many of the departments had little experience with the development of learning goals. Hence, the HLC Assurance Report noted that the learning goals resulting from this first effort were uneven. In order to assist departments and programs in the revision or development of learning goals, the College held two workshops presented by Dr. Barbara Walvoord[2] on the development of departmental goals. The first workshop was held in November 2010, the second in August of 2011. Sixty-five of Knox's 98 full-time faculty members representing 33 different departments and programs participated in these workshops, resulting in much greater understanding of program goals, significant revisions of earlier articulations of goals, and in new enthusiasm for assessment. Of Knox's 39 total programs (including 22 departmental majors, 6 non-departmental interdisciplinary majors, and 11 programs that offer only a minor) all programs now have established learning goals.

The process for programs to develop their learning goals generally followed several stages, including the participation of program faculty in one of the assessment workshops, the drafting by program faculty of program learning goals, an iterative process involving consultation with the Director of

---

[2] Barbara Walvoord, Professor Emerita, University of Notre Dame, is a nationally recognized leader in assessment in higher education. She is author of *Assessment Clear and Simple, 2ⁿᵈ Edition* (2010) and *Effective Grading: A Tool for Learning and Assessment in College, 2ⁿᵈ Edition* (2010), with V.J. Anderson.

Assessment, and the consideration of the program learning goals by the AAG.[3] The process of writing and refining program learning goals began to help faculty understand a traditional tenet of the academic culture at Knox,—the "Freedom to Flourish"—in a new light. That statement has implied strongly the value of self-directed discovery as a key characteristic of learning; it carries with it the necessity of always taking stock, of taking responsibility for one's academic path. Accordingly, assessment within the Knox culture is seen as consistent with this precept: that is, there is consistent taking stock of where the path is leading, of implementing an iterative process of assessment, change, and evaluation. A key component of this task has been to promote a view of program learning goals as part of a dynamic process. Learning goals are revised as departments work with them, review the student experience, and consequently discover any weaknesses in their goals. As evidence of this dynamism, just since 2010, several programs—Business, Computer Science, Dance, Film Studies, Music, and Physics—have already revised their initial learning goals.

Beginning in 2012-2013, Knox's commitment to the development and use of program learning goals was made evident by their inclusion in each department listing in the College Catalog (available at www.knox.edu/offices-and-services/registrar/catalog.html, also at http://www.knox.edu/Documents/OIRA/Department%20Goals%20April%2017.pdf). By including program learning goals in the catalog, Knox makes our expectations for its students. By their inclusion in our website, the College also invites public scrutiny of program goals.

II. MAJORS AND MINORS: ASSESSMENT WITHIN ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

With a focus on departmental majors, in 2009-2010, departments began to provide documentation of their ongoing, i.e., annual, assessment activities. In 2010-11, under the leadership of the AAG,

---

[3] The faculty Curriculum Committee had granted the authority to the AAG to provide review for program learning goals, recognizing that in the formal reviews scheduled for each department and program those goals would be reviewed and potentially revised.

the process of reporting ongoing assessment activities by departments was formalized, further strengthening assessment in the academic culture at Knox. In 2010-2011, 19 of 22 departmental programs completed and documented annual assessment activities.

Knox is being intentional in creating an environment in which assessment reporting is more than a checkbox. While the reporting process is important for the college's goal of developing and monitoring ongoing assessment, the essential value of the annual report is to facilitate and clarify the assessment process for those carrying out the work. With this in mind, in 2011-2012, the AAG and the Director of Assessment developed a two-stage annual reporting process that emphasizes (1) the planning of assessment activities and (2) the implementation of change as a function of information generated from the assessment process. These stages are explained below.

In the fall of each academic year, departments are asked to complete an Assessment Planning Report (see Appendix 3) which is submitted to the Director of Assessment. The planning report includes a list of the program's approved learning goals and asks the department to detail how they used information generated from the previous years' assessment activities to implement changes. Departments are also asked to justify any decision not to make changes. The next component of the report is the description of a plan, detailing assessment activities for the upcoming year. Each activity is tied to a learning goal. Assessments are identified as new or ongoing. This section requires departments (if they had not already done so) to consider their assessment plans early in the academic year to ensure that they have the time to implement their assessment activities for the year.

The second stage of the annual process involves the Assessment Progress Report (Appendix 4), which is submitted each spring to the Director of Assessment. With this report, each department provides an overview of the progress on the activities planned in the fall and reports any additional assessment activities that have been completed. Each department is also asked to provide their mechanisms for

communicating assessment results to all department faculty and for their decision-making processes for implementing changes.

These documents are reviewed each year by the AAG. Not only do these two documents to provide a record of assessment activities at Knox, they provide departments a blueprint for engaging in meaningful assessment. Recognizing that assessment documentation may not always be completed, the AAG also provides a hybrid form in the spring which contains components of both the planning and the progress report. Table 1 provides a summary of learning goals, and documentation of assessment activities (see page 12 for a description of how Knox College defines programs, and Appendix 5: List of Programs for Assessment and Formal Review).

Table 1: Learning Goals and Documentation of Assessment within Majors and Minors (Academic year 2010-1011 through Winter term, 2013)

	Number of Programs	Programs with Learning Goals	Programs documenting 2010-2011 assessment activities	Programs documenting assessment activities 2011-2012	Programs documenting assessment planning 2012-2013	Total Programs with a minimum of documentation of planned assessment activities (2010-2012)
Total Departments/ Programs in Formal Program Review Process	36	36	21	26	30	34
%		100%	58%	72%	83%	94%
Departmentally Housed Major Programs	23	23	21	23	20	23
%		100%	87%	100%	87%	100%
Other Programs (Stand alone minors, interdepartmental programs)	13	13	1	7	10	12
		100%	8%	54%	77%	92%

Examples of Assessment within Academic Programs: In 2010-2011, the **History Department used a rubric to** assess the ability of students to analyze primary resources (one of the program learning

goals) in their senior level courses. The aggregate mean score of 2.4 (on a 4 point scale) was considered as too low by the faculty. As a consequence, faculty in History retooled instruction in their 100-level courses, where the use of primary sources is introduced to the students. The faculty met and shared exercises, sources, and syllabi for these courses, and each gave new consideration to how primary sources are introduced in 100-level courses. During 2012-13, the resulting rubric will be used to evaluate the use of primary sources at the 100-level.

The **Dance Program, which offers a minor,** began its assessment process by examining how well their learning goals matched with actual courses offered in the dance curriculum. Through these conversations, the dance faculty realized that the curriculum did not reflect a minor fully grounded in the liberal arts and did not always reflect their learning outcomes. This conclusion led to the development of a substantially revised curriculum in dance, with clear alignment between goals and courses and the development of assessment tools within the curriculum. During the 2011-2012 academic year, the dance program implemented several assessment projects, including a pre- and post-test on dance theory, as well as mechanisms to measure student learning of dance aesthetics, and peer and personal evaluations. The rubrics developed have clearly defined levels of competency. For example, the faculty identified the following as a beginning level for expected performance skills: "Has moments of displayed confidence, but mostly seems disconnected from the performance." The dance faculty met during the summer 2012 to discuss their assessments. They focused on the Spring Concert and its associated course: Dance Ensemble. The goals for the course were evaluated, and curricular changes for the next offering are being developed.

Finally, the **Math Department** developed a series of quizzes in their course sequence to determine the extent to which students retain knowledge from previous courses in the major. These data were then shared within the department. The faculty found that a majority of students were not successfully

retaining information as they advanced through their coursework. However, in their discussion about these results the department also began to question whether the quizzes reflected accurately the learning goals of the requisite courses. Thus, the department will refine the quizzes while simultaneously focusing on skill retention for majors for 2012-2013 (e.g. by using cumulative midterms and finals).

Generally, when programs and departments have utilized rubrics in their assessment processes, their goals include the development of clearly defined criteria for performance. These assessments identify areas in which improvement in student learning outcomes is needed (even as the criteria themselves are being developed). That is, the development and implementation of Knox's assessment process has not been guided by setting arbitrary *a priori* criteria for course or program learning goals; rather it has been guided by efforts to determine which measures can best identify criteria for success. As the assessment process continues to mature, the expectation is that departments and programs will increasingly adopt more clearly defined criteria success at the program level of learning goals.

III. FORMAL PROGRAM REVIEWS

As with program assessment, Knox has made significant progress with regard to formal assessment of programs (majors and minors). In academic year 2009-2010 the College began by developing the process by which academic departments and programs would complete a comprehensive program review and planning process. Then the program review cycle and timeline were established so that all programs were scheduled to be reviewed within the 10 year accreditation cycle. Each program undergoes the process once every seven years, with all programs being reviewed at least once by Academic year 2016-17. The calendar for program review is found in Appendix 6: Knox College Program Review Guide, 4th revised edition, page 18. Each academic year 3-5 programs are reviewed, creating a manage-

able work cycle. By February 2013, ten programs completed the review process, and three additional programs continue during 2012-13 to be engaged in the process.

Knox College defines "programs" as any area formal major or a minor. Programs can be interdepartmental or housed completely within a single department. Departments may also offer more than one program. Minors for which there are corresponding majors or departments are reviewed as part of the program review for the corresponding major/department. The structure of the program review is sufficiently flexible so that these different organizational structures undergo appropriate review. For example, the English Department, which completed its program review in 2010-11, houses two distinct academic programs: English Literature and Creative Writing, each offering a major and a minor. Both programs were reviewed through the process. Physics, which also completed its program review in 2010-2011, is structured completely within the department. Journalism, completing its review in 2011-2012, is interdepartmental in nature, with a .5-FTE dedicated faculty, augmented by faculty with primary appointments in other programs.

The Program Review process requires that program faculty engage in an intensive self-study. These formal reviews include examining detailed information regarding enrollments, faculty, course offerings, student majors, student minors, assessment processes, alumni outcomes and alumni perceptions. As part of the process, learning goals for the programs are examined (and revised if needed), curriculum maps are developed, and assessment practices are developed and reviewed. Issues are identified which the program faculty wish to address or resolve. The self-study component leads to a campus visit by external consultants who, having read the self-study, spend 2-3 days interacting with faculty, students, and other members of the community engaged with the program. The external consultants then provide a detailed written report for the program faculty, representing their observations, concerns, and recommendation for actions. The report is shared with the Dean. Upon receipt of this report, the program fac-

ulty develop a written response to the findings and recommendations of the external consultant; the response is sent to the Dean. Subsequently, the Dean and program faculty meet to discuss the review, and to identify actions or projects that will result. Each department creates a document entitled "Plans for the Future" at this point, a report that details areas identified for changes and processes by which changes will be implemented. Throughout the following academic year, programs engage in implementing changes and plan for long-term changes. At the end of the academic year, programs provide a "year-out" report that catalogs changes made, and updates the long-term plan for changes. The time line for the program review is found in the Knox College Program Review Guide, pages 3-5 (Appendix 6).

Curricular changes that have been motivated by formal program reviews are proposed by program faculty to the Curriculum Committee and justified, in part, by the findings of the review. Examples of outcomes from formal program reviews include the following:

- Based upon its program review, the **Psychology Department** changed the curricular specialties they had identified in a proposal for an additional tenure track position. The review had identified strong curricular needs that were not being met. The new position request was granted, and a new member of the faculty will join the department in fall of 2013. Psychology also implemented both a direct and indirect assessment of their capstone class for the academic year 2011-2012. The initial data have been disseminated to the department for review and action. Additionally, the department began the process of including departmental learning goals in course syllabi and assessing the extent to which each course meets these goals.

- The **Physics Department** implemented curricular revisions so that the major requirements more closely match best practices in undergraduate physics education. Additionally, the department implemented a new course, PHYS 340, Comprehensive Review of Physics, which provides review of upper-level physics concepts and course work; this course is constructed with direct assessment of student learning in these areas as an integral component. As the number of physics majors is relatively small, additional years are needed to determine the effectiveness of the current curriculum. However, the data from PHYS 340 are already being discussed by the department. More recently, the department, considering the external consultants' recommendation, has

introduced an advanced Physics research course. The Dean has also worked with the department to make several laboratory and facilities improvements.

- The **Journalism** program has begun to restructure its program requirements as a consequence of its review and is implementing a new, more sequential course structure. The Journalism program has relied on a .5 FTE dedicated faculty appointment, and a .5 FTE faculty member from another department. With the imminent retirement of these key faculty, the program review helped the college to develop a transitional model involving the creation of a full-time dedicated tenure-track position. The faculty search was successfully completed during 2012-13 for a September 2013 appointment.

It is important to note that Journalism and other programs offering only minors are as fully engaged in the program review process as those programs housed in formal departments offering majors and supported with multiple tenure lines. The inclusive scope of program assessment at the College has been one of its features that have helped persuade some faculty who have not immediately understood the value of program reviews. Although difficult to measure, as more program reviews are completed and lead to positive curricular, staffing and facilities changes, the "testimony" of participating faculty has helped convince those who have not yet participated in this process of its value—significantly contributing to the integration of assessment as a routine part of Knox academic culture.

Detailed information regarding the Program Review process can be found in Appendix 6

IV. ASSESSMENT BEYOND MAJORS AND MINORS

As indicated by the above narrative, Knox has focused much of its current assessment efforts at the departmental and program level—both within each program and through the formal reviews. This focus has enabled Knox to engage many faculty members in the assessment process as they most closely identify with and best know their own programs. The program level assessment focus has also served as a catalyst for meaningful discussions of both curricula and desired student outcomes for majors and mi-

nors. However, even as program assessment becomes more embedded in the Knox culture, faculty and administrators at the College have been well aware of a need for assessment of broader college goals and their outcomes. To this end, Knox has worked on three major assessment initiatives since 2010: (1) the articulation and affirmation of mission-based college-wide learning goals; (2) the development of learning goals in the General Education Program and (3) the assessment of the First-Year Preceptorial and other special programs.

College-wide Learning Goals

One of the tasks that the AAG set for their participation in the Lisle assessment workshop was the development of a draft set of college-wide learning goals. The initial plan was to take these goals to the college's Curriculum Committee during academic year, 2010-11. However with the departure of the Associate Director of Assessment Support, the AAG turned its attention to managing the newly established assessment initiatives.

One of the first meetings attended by the new Director of Assessment in the spring 2011 was with the Curriculum Committee. The purpose of this meeting was to re-engage the College in the development of college-wide learning goals and to discuss the leadership role of the Curriculum Committee in establishing learning goals at the course, program, and college level. During the summer of 2011, the Dean of the College developed a new working draft of college-wide learning goals, building on earlier efforts. When Knox's consultant, Barbara Walvoord, returned to campus in August to present a workshop on departmental learning goals, the AAG and the Curriculum Committee met jointly with her. In addition to providing a critique of the drafted learning goals, Dr. Walvoord facilitated a discussion of how best to move forward. The steps included determining how the process might work within the governance system at Knox and what timeline for action was most sensible. It was determined that the Cur-

riculum Committee was the appropriate body to develop and propose Knox College learning goals, with

input from the AAG, and that the faculty would b4e asked to endorse the goals.

The Curriculum Committee recommended the draft for the college-wide learning goals entitled,

Goals for a Knox Education, for affirmation by the faculty at the November 7, 2011, regular monthly

faculty meeting. Discussion of these goals was deferred by the faculty until the January meeting. At that

meeting, following discussion, the *Goals for a Knox Education* was endorsed by the full faculty. The

goals are listed in Table 2.

**Table 2: Goals for a Knox Education**

Aspirations for Knox *Graduates*	
Knox graduates will:	
	Live personal and professional lives characterized by integrity, intellectual curiosity, creativity, imagination, thoughtful reflection, and critical thinking.
	Engage effectively with the challenges and opportunities of the wider world in order to contribute to the lives of others, whether locally, nationally, or globally
	Live their lives with competence, confidence, and a sense of proportion
Learning Goals for a Knox Education	
	In order that graduates are able to achieve the above aspirations, Knox *students* will be able to:
GKE-1	Engage with the central questions and methods used within the broad areas of liberal arts learning: arts, humanities, social sciences, science
GKE-2	Demonstrate an in-depth knowledge of at least one academic field
GKE-3	Use technology appropriate to your major field(s)
GKE-4	Locate, assess and synthesize a wide range of sources of information
GKE-5	Reason quantitatively
GKE-6	Communicate effectively through writing and speaking
GKE-7	Read, speak and/or write in a second language
GKE-8	Engage intellectually and empathetically with cultural and social diversity
GKE-9	Recognize and engage with ethical issues
GKE-10	Initiate and carry out independent, self-directed learning

The *Goals for a Knox Education* is an explicit statement of both *aspirations* for graduates drawn

from the educational mission statement of the College and *learning goals* linked to the graduation re-

quirements for students. Thus, these goals should be reflected in graduates' perceptions of their educa-

tional experience. As a way to validate these goals, the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment included questions regarding the GKE in the spring 2012 CIRP administration to seniors.[4] Graduating seniors were asked to describe the level of their achievement of each learning goal upon completion of their time at Knox compared to when they first entered. The results are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Graduating Seniors' Assessment of their Achievement of College-Wide Learning Goals
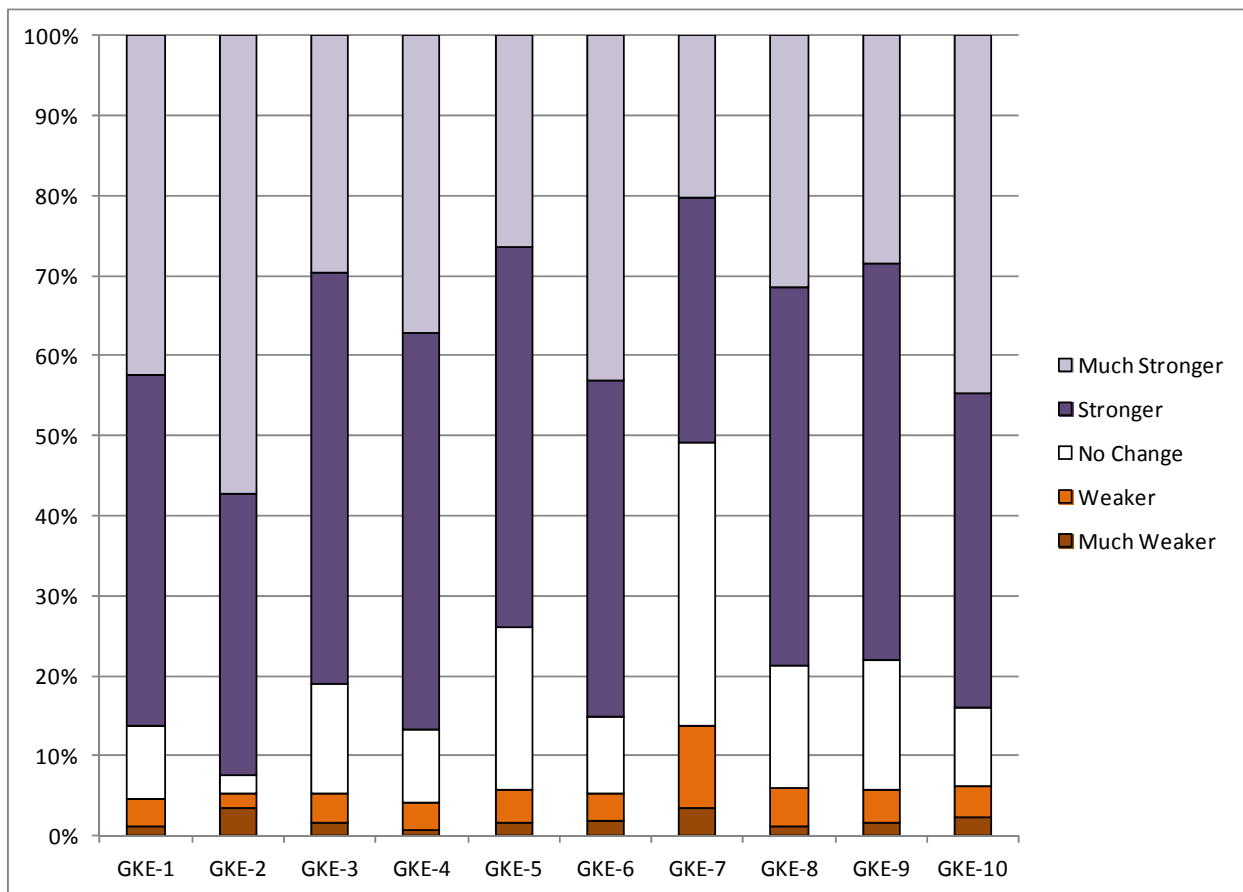
Knox seniors overwhelmingly indicated that through their education, abilities in the ten GKE have improved, providing validation for those goals.

---

[4] The CIRP Senior Survey is a national survey examining the experiences of students finishing their college education. The CIRP provides colleges an opportunity for additional questions. Knox administers the CIRP Senior Survey annually at the rehearsal for graduation.

Additionally, the AAG and Director of Assessment examined the links between learning goals for each academic program and the GKE. The results revealed both how programs (majors and minors) are advancing the general education goals and are a providing a richer assessment how the GKE are supported, i.e., through both specific general education requirements and requirements within majors and minors. Table 3 summarizes these links.

Table 3. Connections Between College-wide Learning Goals, Program Learning Goals, and Assessment

Knox Learn-ing Goal		Number of related De-partmental/ Program Goals*	2011-2012 Assessment Activities^	2012 Planned assessment activities^
GKE-1	Engage with the central questions and methods used within the broad areas of liberal arts learning: arts, humanities, social sciences, science	24	11	13
GKE-2	Demonstrate an in-depth knowledge of at least one academic field	72	22	32
GKE-3	Use technology appropriate to your major field(s)	20	8	11
GKE-4	Locate, assess and synthesize a wide range of sources of information	11	13	6
GKE-5	Reason quantitatively	13	1	0
GKE-6	Communicate effectively through writing and speaking	29	13	14
GKE-7	Read, speak and/or write in a second language	7	2	3
GKE-8	Engage intellectually and empathetically with cul-tural and social diversity	10	5	4
GKE-9	Recognize and engage with ethical issues	6	3	4
GKE-10	Initiate and carry out independent, self-directed learning	23	8	11

* Department/program learning goals may be linked to more than one GKE.
^ Assessment Activities may link to multiple GKE.

While the articulation of college-wide learning goals creates an agenda for future assessment projects, some of these have already begun: GKE-1 is being addressed through the assessment of the Foundations Learning goals (see below). The librarians at Knox's Seymour Library are actively engaged in assessment for GKE-4 as evidenced through their instructional support for locating, accessing, and synthesizing information. For example, this academic year, one of the reference librarians is collaborat-

ing with the English Department faculty to assess students' ability to critically evaluate sources used in 300 level literature courses.

College-wide Programs

In the fall 2012, the Director of Assessment, in collaboration with the Assessment Advisory Group, developed the *Assessment Plan for Knox Graduation Requirements* (Appendix 7) and *Assessment Calendar through 2019: Requirements for Graduation, Other Requirements, and Special Programs of the College* (Appendix 8). Together, these documents comprise a comprehensive assessment plan for general education, other Knox graduation requirements, and unique components of a Knox education (e.g. Honors Program, academic integrity, and off-campus study programs). The documents were then submitted to the Curriculum Committee for final approval. The Curriculum Committee approved and adopted the plan at their February 19, 2013, meeting. Even before the full plan was articulated and approved, several projects were already underway, and are described below.

"Foundation" Learning Goals. Beginning in the spring of 2011, faculty members with responsibility for teaching designated courses in each of the four Foundation areas (Arts, Humanities, History and Social Science, and Math and Natural Sciences) began to meet to develop Foundation learning goals. The Foundations requirement had been implemented in 2002-03 after the Curriculum Committee developed "guidelines" for such courses and faculty applied to have certain of their courses designated as "Foundations" in one of the four curricular areas. However, the initial implementation of Foundation courses occurred prior to the College's focused attention on and understanding of assessment and the recognition of the role of formal learning goals. Thus, in spring 2011, after all faculty had experience with learning goals at their program and course levels, they were asked to revisit the 2002 Foundation guidelines and to replace them with assessable learning goals. These discussions enabled the faculty within each curricular area to come together and explicitly discuss the common purpose of the Founda-

tion requirements for graduation and to determine the common learning outcomes for courses that meet their respective Foundation area. Their resulting drafts of Foundation learning goals were discussed by the AAG and sent to the Curriculum Committee for formal adoption. The Curriculum Committee approved the Foundation learning goals for three of the four areas (Arts, Humanities, and History & Social Sciences) by the end of spring 2012. Within the Mathematics and Natural Science (MNS) area, the difficulty in articulating a single set of learning goals, led the MNS faculty to the conclusion that their aspirations for Knox students could not be realized by combining math and natural science into a single Foundation. Through a series of deliberations, MNS faculty developed new learning goals for two new Foundations, previously encompassed by MNS. Based on these learning goals, the MNS faculty proposed that the entire Knox faculty approve a change in graduation requirements that would:

1. Create a new foundation: Quantitative and Symbolic Reasoning (QSR); and
2. Replace the existing MNS foundation with Natural and Physical Sciences (NPS) foundation. This Foundation would have its core the scientific method.

In March 2013, the Curriculum Committee approved the new learning goals for the two new Foundations to replace MNS, and the Knox faculty unanimously adopted the QSR and NPS Foundations, to replace the former MNS Foundation and to take effect fall of 2014. The learning goals for all Foundations are found in Appendix 9.

Given the approval of the Foundation learning goals, and as part of the *Assessment Plan for Knox Graduation Requirements* (Appendix 7), the faculty who teach Foundation courses are being asked by the Curriculum Committee to document how their current Foundation courses address the Foundation goals. The results will likely include the removal of Foundation designation from some of those courses, the revision of some existing Foundation courses to address the new learning goals, and the development of new Foundation courses. This process is intended to apply the common understanding of the Founda-

tions that resulted from faculty members in each area of the curriculum developing assessable learning goals to ensure that each set of Foundation courses is fully aligned with those goals.

First-Year Preceptorial. Since the 1970s, Knox has required entering first-year students to enroll in First-Year Preceptorial, a "common course" consisting of multiple sections, taught by faculty members from across the campus, but following an identical syllabus. In the Spring of 2011, Knox College faculty approved a major revision of the program. The faculty agreed to experiment by replacing the common syllabus with a set of small seminars, each developed on a separate theme by a faculty or group of faculty. The proposed FP courses had the following common elements, adopted by the faculty to guide the program:

1. The course should address a broad theme or topic, i.e., a "big question" explored from a range of perspectives. The aim of the course is NOT to introduce students to academic disciplines.
2. The course must be Writing Intensive. (Elements of writing intensive courses are described in the catalog).
3. The course must be discussion- rather than lecture-based, teaching students the skills of listening and speaking.
4. The course must nurture critical thinking.
5. The course must address academic integrity through consideration of intellectual honesty and instruction in proper annotation.

With the faculty having agreed to embark on this new program, the Curriculum Committee developed these guidelines into the following common learning goals that had to be addressed in proposals for new FP courses:

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. write a short essay that, with clarity and accuracy, presents a convincing argument or analysis;
2. contribute to class discussion, demonstrating careful listening to others as well as close reading of the assigned texts;
3. demonstrate habits of critical thinking in their contributions to class discussion as well as in their written work;
4. demonstrate an understanding of the meaning of "academic integrity" as it applies to academic work, including proper citation.

In order to assess the learning goals of the new FP, as well as to compare student learning out-comes with the previous common course model, the faculty Director of FP and the Director of Assessment met in the summer of 2011 and began the development of the assessment for the new FP model. These assessments built upon the previous years' FP evaluations that looked at both students' self-evaluation of their own skill levels and their perceptions of the course as well as a parallel evaluation of the students and the course by FP faculty. In addition, two new assessments were developed; one focused on academic integrity, and a direct assessment of student writing. These assessments were completed for both fall 2011 and fall 2012 FP offerings.

- Academic Integrity in FP In collaboration with the Director of FP and the Director of Assessment, one of the reference librarians developed a pre- and post-test on academic integrity and an online tutorial. Both years, students enrolled in FP were invited to complete the online pre- and post-test. Course instructors had the option of giving students credit toward their course grade for completing the tests. The pre and post-tests were announced to all students via emails, and faculty were given access to the URL for the tutorial as well. Results from the pre-test were shared with all faculty teaching FP as soon as they were available. In both years, students showed some improvement in their performance with regard to knowledge of citation rules and their ability to apply them. Further, positive shifts in student attitudes toward academic integrity were also evident. Improvement was greater for 2012 as compared to 2011. In addition, more faculty reported using the pre-test data to inform their teaching of academic integrity within their respective course sections.

- Writing in FP A group of faculty volunteers working with the Director of Assessment developed a direct assessment of writing, using the Association of American Colleges and University's VALUE (Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education) rubrics for writing as a

starting point. The VALUE rubrics were developed through the AAC&U's Liberal Education and America's Promise initiative. The FP rubric is found in Appendix 10. For both years, a random sample of student papers was solicited from all FP sections. Most faculty provided papers for the assessment. Each year, following a norming session, at least two faculty members read and evaluated each paper according to the rubric. The 2011 results were used to develop the content concerning writing for the 2012 FP faculty workshop.

One of the major writing emphases of the 2012 annual FP faculty workshop was developing and supporting thesis statements. Correspondingly, students and faculty in 2012 reported a greater instructional emphasis on writing thesis statements as compared to the previous year. While the direct assessment did not indicate clear improvement in "Clearly articulated thesis statements" from 2011 FP to 2012 FP, students improved with regard to "Information and evidence are accurate, relevant, and appropriate" and in "The ideas presented are credible and appropriate to the assignment" as measured by the percentage of students who showed awareness of and attention to these components of their writing.

Finally, two evaluations used prior to 2011, one that focused specifically on writing instruction and a course evaluation that focused on learning outcomes, were combined and revised to create a new FP course evaluation that allowed direct comparisons between the previous common-course FP and the new model. Students completed an in-class version and faculty completed an online version. These data have demonstrated that the new FP is at least as effective in meeting the goals of the course. In each year, the FP assessment data have been shared first with the FP faculty and then with entire faculty, and discussed at a regular monthly faculty meeting. These assessments inform faculty regarding strengths and areas for improvement with regard to writing and academic integrity.

All the FP assessment data are being used to help the faculty reach a decision by the end of fall term 2013 to continue with the new format of FP or return to the common course. See Appendix 11 for additional information regarding FP assessment.

The Honor Code. An integral component of a Knox education is the Knox Honor Code, first developed and implemented by students in 1950. The Honor Code is designed to nurture an understanding and practice of academic integrity as a central tenet of a Knox education (see *Goals for a Knox Education,* specifically the Aspirations for Graduates and GKE-9). The system involves a student/faculty Honor Board that hears cases of alleged violations of the code. In recent years, concerns have been raised both by faculty and students about the relationship of the Code to changing understandings about academic integrity held by students entering the College, the potential need for some changes in the procedures associated with the Code, and ways to provide more education to students about the meaning and importance of academic integrity.

During academic year 2011-2012, the Academic Standing Committee (comprised of appointed faculty members, the Associate Dean of the College, the Dean of Students, the Registrar, and several student members) named a faculty/student review committee to begin an extensive examination of the Honor Code. As part of this review, both faculty and student perceptions of the Honor Code were assessed using a survey that examined attitudes and beliefs regarding academic integrity (based upon initial research by McCabe and Trevino[5]).These results were compiled and presented to faculty and to students. These assessment data were also joined with information and suggestions gleaned from the campus visit of Tricia Bertram Gallant from the University of California, San Diego, where she serves as Director of the Academic Integrity Office. During her visit, Professor Gallant held several open discussions with faculty and students. The Honor Code Review Committee has used this information to rec-

---

[5] McCabe, D.L., and Trevino, L.K, 1993, Academic dishonesty: Honor codes and other contextual influences. *Journal of Higher Edcuation*, 64, 522-538.

ommend changes in the Honor Code, and those changes are currently being deliberated by the campus community.

College Honors Program. The Knox College Honors Program is an opportunity for students who, upon entering their senior year, have a GPA of 3.3 or higher. Students apply to the program by developing a proposal for a significant research or creative project supported by a committee of three Knox faculty. Accepted students complete an extensive year-long independent project culminating in a formal defense (modeled on a graduate level thesis defense) with their committee, augmented by the participation of an expert from another campus in the field of the honors project. Beginning in academic year 2009-2010, the former Director of Knox's Gerald and Carol Vovis Center for Research and Advanced Study, which administers the program, requested that the (former) Assistant Director for Assessment Support develop and implement a survey of the Honors students' experiences and outcomes. In spring of 2011, the newly appointed Director of the Vovis Center asked the new Director of Assessment to review the previous years' assessment, make any needed revisions, and again assess the experiences of the Honors students. For example, a review of the previous year's survey indicated that very little information had been gathered from students who did not successfully complete their Honors project. As a result, the survey for the students who did not complete their Honors projects was revised extensively, and data were collected for both 2010-2011 and 2011-2012. Data indicate that the experiences of the completers and the non-completers differ in important ways (e.g. non-completers identified more extrinsic motivation, such as, "It will look good on my resume"). These findings are being used to develop resources both for students and for faculty directors of honors projects. The assessment of the Honor's Program will continue so that we can evaluate the impact of the new resources.

New Student Orientation. Since the fall of 2012, a new focus on *community* and *inclusion* has been incorporated into Knox's New Student Orientation. The goals include increasing student

knowledge of the greater Galesburg community and an increasing new students' sense of community. The themes—campus community, engagement, and roles within the larger (i.e., Galesburg) community—were made more explicit within orientation activities. New activities, including an optional Day of Service for the Galesburg area, were added to orientation.

To determine the effectiveness of the community focus, the existing New Student Orientation evaluation was extensively revised to include questions regarding community. A separate evaluation of eleven different Day of Service activities was also completed. The results of these evaluations indicate that students did learn about their roles and responsibilities within and to the Knox community, and that orientation activities did contribute to their sense of the wider community. Students who participated in activities that explored the Galesburg community identified more options for activities than those who did not. Students who participated in the Day of Service were also able to articulate organizational missions and believed that they learned about the community and its needs through the Day of Service.

BUILDING THE CULTURE OF ASSESSMMENT: 2012-2013 AND BEYOND

At the time of its most recent re-accreditation review, Knox College did not question the HLC requirement to provide a monitoring report on assessment. Members of the College community knew that an institutional commitment had been made to integrate assessment as a central educational practice for the College. Steps had already been taken to secure funding to establish an Office of Institutional Research and Assessment to provide the support and expertise that, joined with faculty support and expertise, would advance an assessment initiative—and work had begun. At the same time, members of the College community agreed with the external reviewers that the Knox's assessment activities at that time were at an early stage of implementation.

Since that time, we have continued to move forward on our assessment initiative and, in our view, have made significant progress. Further, we have a clear set of agenda which will guide the further deepening and expansion of our assessment efforts in the next several years. The status of these agenda are summarized below:

- *Assessment within Departments and Programs:* Departments and programs at Knox now routinely engage in and report annually on assessment activities within their programs—focused on the extent to which learning goals are realized through their courses and their requirements—using data to plan changes and implement changes in instruction and in curricular requirements. The processes have been developed over the last three years, that is, subsequent to the reaccreditation visit—and will continue to be used and expanded upon as we continue to improve assessment.

- *Assessment through Formal Program Reviews*: Since our last re-accreditation, Knox College has successfully implemented a formal program review process. Now in its fourth year, program review will continue on a seven-year cycle. Moreover, the results of each review cycle are being used to improve the Program Review process itself. For example, this academic year, Knox College Program Review Guide, was revised to incorporate assessing how programs address several general education requirements embedded in Knox's majors, e.g., Oral Proficiency, Writing, and Information Literacy and Informed Use of Technology. Additional revisions may focus on standard use of the Common Data Set (see Appendix 6).

- *Assessment of General Education: Foundations*. Since our re-accreditation, learning goals have been articulated for each Foundation curricular area and faculty will be engaged in reviewing and potentially revising approved Foundation courses in light of those goals. In addition, a continuous assessment of the revised First-Year Preceptorial is ongoing.

- *Assessment of General Education: Key Competencies.* In Academic Year 2012-2013, the assessment of the Writing Key Competency is being undertaken. A working group has been established, and has reviewed course syllabi, student enrollments in courses designated as meeting the Writing Key Competency, solicited input from academic support services, reviewed CIRP Senior Survey data related to writing, and reviewed department/program learning goals and assessments related to writing. A faculty conversation regarding the Writing competency is scheduled for

May 1st, 2013. The working group is currently developing direct assessment of writing using student artifacts from the spring 2013 term.

- *Other areas*: Assessment of a revised New Student Orientation will continue in the fall 2014. As noted on our calendar (Appendix 8), we will expand assessment activities to other areas of general education, including other key competencies, Experiential Learning and the Educational Plan. Senior and alumni surveys will continue to incorporate standard questions about the value of the Educational Plan and Experiential Learning, providing a starting point for assessment of these graduation requirements. Additionally, a survey of seniors who did not study off campus is exploring the reasons for that decision.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE FOR ASSESSMENT AT KNOX COLLEGE

The initial steps in providing an organizational structure to guide and support assessment of student learning at Knox have been successful, but we are mindful that further experience may result in changes.

- At present, the coordinating body for assessment is the **Assessment Advisory Group** (AAG), led by the Associate Dean of the College. This group has provided effective faculty leadership for all areas of the assessment initiative. Discussions are underway with the new Dean of the College, whose appointment begins in July 2013, regarding the status of AAG and its place within the governance system.

- Curricular changes that result from assessment (e.g., program reviews, learning goal-based department assessments) are under the aegis of the faculty's **Curriculum Committee**.

- The **Director of Assessment**, housed in the College's Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, now reports directly to the Dean of the College, is a member of the AAG, and, when necessary, attends meetings of the Curriculum Committee. She continues to provide consultations with individual faculty members, department and program chairs, and other College offices (e.g., Vovis Center for Research and Advanced Study, the Center for Teaching and Learning) and has worked on several grants to develop assessment plans for funded initiatives. These latter include developing new assessments for the college's Ronald E. McNair Program, funded through the U.S. Department of Education, and National Science Foundation grants to individual faculty members. Additionally, the Director of Assessment serves the larger higher education

community through her appointment as a Teagle Assessment Scholar in fall of 2011, and as an HLC peer reviewer (fall, 2012).

- The **Office of Institutional Research and Assessment** provides campus-wide support for collection of customized survey data related to campus initiatives, programs, and other issues (e.g. sustainability, faculty perspectives on the common course evaluation).

In describing the work needed to strengthen assessment at Knox, the HLC stated "The same discipline and attention used to accomplishing the financial goals of the last decade need to be applied to meeting these goals". Through the dedication of Knox faculty, staff, the Assessment Advisory Group, and Curriculum Committee, Knox College has applied this discipline and attention to assessment based on a shared understanding that our students benefit from these efforts through the strengthening of a rigorous and effective academic program.