Dr. Mark Freeman  
Director of Institutional Research, Planning, and Assessment  
Taylor Hall 213  
Bryn Mawr College  
Bryn Mawr, PA 19010

Annie Bezbatchenko  
Program Associate  
The Teagle Foundation  
570 Lexington Avenue  
38th Floor  
New York, NY 10022

Dear Ms. Bezbatchenko,

Please find enclosed our annual interim report for year three of the Teagle-funded Systematic Improvement project titled, *Beyond the Reaccreditation Self-Study: Bryn Mawr, Haverford, and Swarthmore Colleges collaborate to develop best practices for sustainable and effective department-level assessment*.

We are grateful to the Teagle Foundation for the no-cost extension (approval received February 2, 2012) of the original grant through Spring 2015. The grant extension request itself represented a rather thorough summative assessment of the grant activities through that date, recounting what we had learned in the first 30 months of the grant as a basis for replicating the model in modified form for a three-year extension. Thus, as we discussed when preparing the extension request for the grant, rather than repeat that material, the narrative portion of the current year-end interim report focuses on the dissemination activities (both completed and planned), some of the primary “take-aways” from round 1 concerning sustainability, and on our preparation for “Round 2” of the grant activities.

In addition to this cover letter, we are submitting the following materials:

- A narrative description of: (1) the culminating dissemination event involving faculty leaders from the second round of Tri-College departments as well as assessment leaders and faculty from other campuses, which took place April 20, 2012 at Swarthmore College, and, (2) the key themes of the organizational learning that emerged from round 1 and informed the design of the second round of the project.
• A year-end 2011-2012 expense report framed in the context of our grant extension request; we spent slightly less than budgeted for 2011-2012, and so budgeted amounts for 2012-2013 through 2014-2015 are also adjusted very slightly.
• Attendance list from the final dissemination event for round 1.
• Rubric developed for assessing the faculty projects, used by faculty themselves as a peer assessment tool.
• Year-end “journalistic summaries” of experiences providing leadership and visibility to the year three activities from the Provosts and other provostial representatives.
• A year-end “journalistic summary” jointly prepared by the Institutional Research leaders on the grant. We have been working very closely together in this last year of the initial grant – meeting in person for well over fifty hours as well as working independently on our own campuses – so much so that our independent assessments and reflections on the work have markedly converged, a convergence that has been reinforced by our joint preparation of a presentation to be given at the Higher Education Data Sharing (HEDS) consortium in Minneapolis Minnesota on Monday June 18, 2012 and at the Associated Independent Colleges of Pennsylvania (AICUP) on August 7, 2012. We submit here a brief narrative summary highlighting our key “take-aways” from round 1 of the Teagle grant, the results of that learning on the modifications made to round 2 of the grant, and the complete slide show, with notes, that we will be presenting at HEDS and AICUP.

Many more materials, including final reports from the year one participants and copies of the materials used in the Swarthmore College dissemination event are posted to the active Teagle Tri-College website at: www.brynmawr.edu/institutionalresearch/teagle/

Once again, we are grateful to the Teagle Foundation for supporting this important work on our campuses, and for extending the grant into a second round. I hope that it is evident from this report and the prior material just how much impact the project has had on the ways that our three colleges are executing on department-level assessment, and indeed on our evolving integrated plans for assessing student learning outcomes at the institutional and course-levels as well.

Yours sincerely,

Mark A. Freeman
Principal Investigator
Director, Institutional Research, Planning, and Assessment
Bryn Mawr College
TEAGLE INTERIM REPORT
JUNE 2012
(End of grant year three)

Beyond the Reaccreditation Self-Study:
Bryn Mawr, Haverford, and Swarthmore collaborate to develop best practices for effective and sustainable department-level assessment of student learning

This report finds us at the conclusion of what was originally planned as the final year of our Teagle Systematic Improvement grant project. The success of the first two-and-a-half years of the project with three of our academic departments from each campus (as well as our own fiscal prudence in expense areas budgeted to project dissemination and staff support) prompted us to apply to the Teagle Foundation for a no-cost grant extension in January 2012. The extension request, which was granted February 2012, essentially permits the Tri-College consortium to build on the success of the first round of the project by repeating it in a slightly compressed form, with modifications reflecting the significant organizational learning that occurred during that initial work.

The details of those plans for the grant extension – essentially years four to six of the grant – are outlined in the grant extension request itself, submitted January 2012 and reproduced in the appendix, and so will not be repeated here. This interim report, rather, will focus on the following two topics:

1. Describing the project’s dissemination activities – both past and planned – concerning the work of department-level assessment at liberal arts campuses

2. Our own high-level reflections on what we have learned from our first three years working on the project, and on how this has informed the design of the second phase. In a sense this topic can be thought as both a summative assessment on the key findings from the first round of the project, as well as a formative reflection on what this means for the next round of department-level assessment and beyond.
1. Dissemination activities

April 20, 2012 Swarthmore College dissemination event

The original grant had oriented this element of the project toward extra-institutional faculty dissemination of the project activities. Several possibilities for dissemination were considered as we began to develop and discuss options with faculty and Provosts on our campuses for completing this aspect of the project. Three of our faculty will be participating in dissemination activities outside of the Tri-College consortium (see below), but in the end most of the faculty and the Provostial representatives felt that the greatest benefit – and the most powerful dissemination, in the sense of other faculty actually taking up and acting on some of the strategies and techniques used in the project – would be felt by other faculty within the Tri-Co itself. But some faculty seemed to feel that dissemination outside of the Tri-Co, whether at their own professional conferences or at a venue such as Middle States’ annual meeting, would amount to “busywork” of limited lasting value, whereas sharing within the Tri-Co was something in which their colleagues had already expressed at least some interest. Faculty were already sharing their work with their faculty colleagues on their own campuses as part of a separate originally planned set of grant activities, but not within a Tri-Co structure.

In the end, the best solution was to hold a Tri-Co dissemination event for the “Round 1” faculty, to which all “Round 2” faculty, other interested faculty from within the Tri-Co, and faculty and administrators from area colleges would be invited to attend. The event was held at Swarthmore College in place of the originally scheduled sixth retreat, and though many of the attendees were participants in the project, a respectable number were from outside the grant and from other area colleges (see appendix for attendance list).

The event itself was very successful – about half of the event was organized around formal presentations or comments by the Tri-Co Provosts, IR staff, and by three of the Round 1 faculty talking about their projects, with the other half structured as small-table discussions led by each of the Round 1
faculty on the mechanics and techniques of assessment. There was ample time scheduled for informal conversations with wine and cheese refreshments. We did not conduct a formal “satisfaction” survey assessing the event, but by all accounts it was a success; the participants from other campuses were particularly grateful for the opportunity to see how other institutions were organizing their efforts in the challenging area of department-level assessment.

Higher Education Data Sharing (HEDS) conference presentation: June 18, 2012, Minneapolis, MN

The three Institutional Research staff, and one of the Round 1 faculty participants (Alex Norquist, Haverford College, Chemistry Department) will be making a presentation at this conference focused on institutional collaboration in assessment efforts. The format will allow us to present the project organization, a faculty example of a departmental project, and several of the key findings. A copy of the presentation is available in the appendix.


The three IR staff will essentially be repeating the HEDS presentation at this workshop, titled, “Lessons Learned from a Consortium Approach to Assessing Student Learning at the Department Level”, with two different faculty members (Bethany Schneider, English; Nathan Wright, Sociology, both from Bryn Mawr) tentatively attending as faculty participants.

Project website

Another key aspect of originally planned dissemination was the project website. This website was developed early in the grant, largely as an internal resource for information sharing across participants in the grant project, but was completely overhauled in early 2012 to be oriented toward faculty and administrators not familiar with the grant within and beyond our institutions (http://www.brynmawr.edu/institutionalresearch/teagle/). An important feature, requested by Provosts on behalf of their faculties, was a “toolbox” section of measurement techniques and examples organized by measurement strategy (http://www.brynmawr.edu/institutionalresearch/teagle/measures.html).
Key themes from round 1: Informing the design of round 2

The themes outlined below represent a synthesis of what we – faculty and administrative assessment leaders – have learned from the first round of the project in our work with faculty. They are evident throughout all of the written materials produced within the grant activities, but especially the Provostial and Institutional Research staff year-end reflective summaries (see appendix), which have proven to be a particularly important feature of the grant proposal.

Preserving (faculty) flexibility trumps (administrative) efficiency

The small, liberal-arts college model of education is resource-intensive and deeply reflective of unique institutional values and practices. This cultural specificity is amplified further across the academic departments within such colleges. One of the two primary goals of the grant was to make department-level assessment sustainable (i.e., efficient, scalable) from an administrative perspective. What we learned was that for departments just beginning this work, efforts to achieve standardization were counterproductive as often as they were helpful. Efforts to develop a common language, share best practices, and broadly outline a common process were beneficial movements toward standardization, but in this direction, but other efforts – sharing templates of examples of departmental learning goals, sharing templates of measures, asking departments to use the barest of common formats for submitting reports – were resisted or simply ignored.

This made the task of managing the work of these nine departments and providing helpful feedback to them much more time-consuming. But in the end – at least for departments going through this process in a meaningful way for the first time – we learned that departmental “freedom” within the barest of structures for assessment work produced the optimal results in terms of faculty and departmental buy-in. This has important resource implications but, analogously, so does maintaining 8:1 or 10:1 student to faculty ratios in our classroom, something that is both resource-intensive and yet core to our identity. In the future, however, we do hold out hope that departmental familiarity with
assessment work will help them gradually appreciate the virtues of a more standardized, efficient institutional framework.

**The first part of the assessment loop – articulating learning goals – is the highest benefit-to-cost activity**

Several of our faculty reported that the mere act of having departmental conversations about learning goals identified several obvious “low-hanging fruit” for curricular change and improvement. Introductory courses with unclear goal statements and organization were revamped; course sequences out of sync with learning goals were realigned; and learning goals inadequately represented in departmental curricula in the first place were addressed with new courses or new course elements. One of the most poignant comments from one faculty in this respect: “Before the Teagle project, our department meetings were infrequent, poorly attended, and focused on personnel and space issues – now we actually spend significant time in our department meeting talking about our curriculum, about our discipline, and how best to communicate it to students.” Two other faculty from other departments, in separate contexts, used the term “revolutionized” to describe how the work of developing departmental learning goals had prompted a complete overhaul and transformation of the gateway courses in their respective disciplines.

We learned from these experiences that the task of developing good goal statements – even in the absence of direct measurement of them – can be a very high-benefit / low-cost activity for departments. Even projects that, at the end of the day, may not have represented textbook examples of direct assessment of learning goals, were nonetheless experienced as powerful learning events for faculty and departments. Of course, on the administrative side, we observed that the serious-mindedness with which faculty approached the task of developing goal statements was in part a result of the direct measurement context within which they were developed.
Interdepartmental collaboration may be more important than inter-institutional

A major part of the internal impetus for this grant was to respond to faculty pleas on our campuses to know “what departments at other campuses are doing.” With this in mind, we designed the collaborative aspect of the grant around six major Tri-College retreats, two per year. As the grant got underway, however, it became clear that faculty regarded the intra-institutional collaborative elements – working across departments on one’s own campus – to be even more useful. This evolving perception highlighted again the importance of attending to the strength of our distinct institutional cultures, and so we dialed back the Tri-college elements of collaboration for faculty (one shorter retreat per year) and ramped up the on-college, inter-departmental elements. On the administrative side, however, we found the Institutional Research / Provost meetings across the Tri-Co to be very helpful, and these will continue through the second round of the grant.

Creating space for assessment work is a non-trivial task

Regularized time and space to talk are probably the single most critical “necessary condition” of meaningful assessment work, within departments and within institutions as a whole. Indeed we might come close to adding, based on our experience of round 1, that it is almost a “sufficient condition” as well: our faculty are committed educators who, put together in a room long enough, supported by a little guidance on process and some methodological expertise, will do meaningful assessment work pretty much on their own.

But assessment work is not yet embedded in other processes, and other demands on faculty time are great – the stakes for assessment work are currently either too low for it to happen without consistent effort to keep it on the front burner (referred to by one of our institutional research staff as the “pushing wet spaghetti” problem), or too high for faculty to perceive it as an organic, natural extension of their work. Creating time and space for assessment work is a non-trivial task, even with faculty receiving additional incentives and visibility as provided by the structure of the Teagle grant.
Over the long-term, as assessment becomes just “part of what faculty do”, perhaps the need to think consciously about additional incentives and resources to support the work will be diminished; but that day is still distant one, and until then, the basic logistics of planning time and space for the work remain a central, and substantial, concern.

At this stage, raising the stakes will not necessarily yield better results

Recognizing the demands on faculty time from the outset, and the absence of an obvious “hook” for assessment work within the incentive structure for faculty and departmental work, one of our hopes for the grant was to suggest – with the collaborative participation of the major stakeholders (faculty, Provosts, and Institutional Researchers) – appropriate links between assessment work and the existing elements of that incentive structure. Periodic departmental reviews, departmental proposals for new faculty lines, annual departmental reviews, tenure and promotion evaluations, course evaluation processes – each of these extant assessment “moments” presented themselves as sites to embed direct assessment of student learning within existing institutional processes.

This discussion, undertaken throughout the grant but most directly in the third and fourth Tri-College retreats, frankly did not get much traction. Faculty saw the virtue of not treating assessment as an “add-on”, but in reviewing each of these candidate sites in turn, the emergent sense was that linking assessment work to resource allocation or promotion in such a direct manner would be counterproductive and have a chilling effect on the overall assessment effort, at least at this stage of implementation. Even as faculty recognized that this decision had its costs – notably the need to create additional incentives – they collectively regarded the benefits as more important: a greater willingness to take risks, to try new curricular approaches and, as one English faculty member colorfully put it, “shine a light in our own dark corners.”

Conclusions and thoughts on “Round 2”
The key changes to the second round of the grant project resulting from these and other reflections on our experiences with the first round are:

- Faculty project duration reduced from 3 to 2.5 years
- Since most participating departments have already developed learning goals, this part of the work will for them be “refinement” instead of “development”
- External project dissemination requirements for faculty were reduced
- More inter-departmental meetings on each campus, reduced inter-institutional meetings across campuses for faculty. Tri-Co administrative meetings (IR and Provostial representatives) will continue.

Again, as the culture of department-level assessment work continues to evolve on our campuses, many of these “truths” about that culture are likely to evolve as well. As departmental procedures for conducting assessment become regularized, a greater appreciation for standardization will certainly emerge, and the perceived need for “new” time and space to do this work should diminish as well. And finally, as ongoing assessment of student learning outcomes continues to drive curricular and pedagogical practice at the departmental level through work like that supported by the Teagle project, resource allocation will ultimately be directed by this work, even if this happens indirectly.
Appendix: Selected materials generated from grant-funded activities

1. Year three expense report, in context of grant extension
2. Reallocation / grant extension proposal, approved February 5, 2012
3. Attendance list: April 20, 2012 event at Swarthmore College
4. Rubric developed for evaluating faculty projects
5. Reflective summaries Provostial representatives
6. Institutional Research presentation summarizing the project and reflecting on what we learned from Round 1
### Projected budgeted versus expended amounts, original grant period (years 1 through 3)

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<th>2009-2010 Year 1</th>
<th>2010-2011 Year 2</th>
<th>2011-2012 Year 3</th>
<th>Year 1 through 3</th>
<th>Benefits (per grant extension)</th>
<th>Actual Spent / Projected surplus (deficit)</th>
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### Projected reallocation of funds to Year 4 - 6 extension

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Dear Ms. Bezbatchenko,

I am writing to request an extension of our Tri-College Teagle project, *Beyond the Reaccreditation Self-Study: Bryn Mawr, Haverford, and Swarthmore Colleges collaborate to develop best practices for sustainable and effective department-level assessment*, to December 2014, and also to request an associated reallocation of the original grant funds.

We were so pleased with the success of the project in its first two-and-a-half years that we would like to initiate a second round of the project with a new set of departments on each of our campuses in the Fall of 2012, continuing through Fall 2014. The attached expense report and reallocation request outlines the financial aspects of our request in detail: essentially we are requesting that the funds initially proposed for “project dissemination” in year three, as well as funds that will be unspent from other budget lines by the end of year three, be reallocated toward the work of a new set of departments on an assessment project modeled closely on the original project, for two and a half years.

We will incentivize faculty participation in three departments (one from each academic division, as in the original grant) on each campus with annual stipends of $1,500 (plus benefits) for three years, which is the primary expense of the second round we propose. Some additional expenditures to support Tri-college meetings and retreat activities are also requested. Additionally, Bryn Mawr College will be contributing a portion (0.25 FTE) of a grant-funded position to support the logistical aspects of the second round of the project.

As you can see from the attached budget proposal for the year 4 through 6 extension request, the reallocated original grant funds will cover the majority of the expenses for years four through six. The three colleges will equally financially support meeting the amounts in excess of the reallocated Teagle grant funds.
Based on what we learned through assessments of our first round activities with faculty, we propose the following revisions to activities planned for the second round of departments:

1. We would reduce the number of Tri-college retreats from two per year to one per year, in April 2013, April 2014, and November 2014. Faculty found these to be helpful, but they were rated as the least useful of the round one activities for faculty.

2. Increase the number of on-campus meetings (intra-institutional meetings of participating faculty, provostial representatives, and IR staff) from two per year to at least four per year in the first year of the project, keeping two in year two, and one in year three (see timetable below). Faculty reported these to be more effective venues to share progress and critique one another. Some of the initial training that took place in the Tri-College retreats would now take place in these smaller, shorter, on-campus meetings.

3. Focus the grant somewhat more narrowly on faculty activities. A major focus of the original grant was to essentially use faculty as a “think tank” for developing sustainable approaches to department level assessment in terms of administrative support and other resources. We have learned much from these efforts, and they have helped us understand how to make this work effective and sustainable. While some of the Tri-college retreat activities will be devoted to the administrative / logistical elements of the work, we do not feel the need to focus as intensively on this aspect in Round two.

4. Regular meetings of the Tri-Co Institutional Research Directors will continue to support the overall process.

5. While the first round of the grant demonstrated the importance of training faculty in a common understanding of the context, terminology, and process of department-level assessment, we have developed many good materials to help streamline this task, and feel we can use the on-campus meetings to perform it much more efficiently.

6. Much of the intensive training, departmental discussion, and faculty work would be frontloaded in year one. One of our primary learnings from the first round of the grant was that faculty perceived the development of learning goals and assessment strategy to be the highest benefit-to-cost activity in the grant. Developing measures was time-consuming for some departments, but gathering data was typically was less intensive in terms of the demands placed on faculty and departmental time.

7. We believe we can compress the three-year period into five semesters, or 2.5 years. Our round one departments have essentially completed their important work by this time, with the exception of the dissemination activities. We will likely launch a third round of departments overlapping with the concluding activities of the round two departments in Fall 2014.

Here is the timeline of activities we propose for the conclusion of round one, which revises the original grant proposal, and establishes the plan for round two. This timeline is approximate. Since departments with our colleges are at different stages with respect to articulating departmental goals for student
learning, flexibility is beneficial. A department that is farther along may move more quickly through the first steps and spend more focused time at another stage of the assessment loop, while a department that is not as far along initially will benefit from more deliberate attention to the goal articulation phase. As we learned from the first round of the grant, the sharing of ideas and experiences is beneficial even if we are not in exactly the same place.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Activities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February / March</td>
<td>Round one departments have on-campus meetings to plan final dissemination activities, plan handoff to Round two departments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2012</td>
<td>Round two departments and faculty participants identified</td>
</tr>
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</table>
| April 2012       | Tri-college dissemination event: Round one departments present their work to:  
|                  | 1. Round two departments                                                                                                               |
|                  | 2. Other invited Tri-college departments                                                                                               |
|                  | 3. Invited faculty from area colleges, particularly in corresponding departments                                                          |
| June 2012        | Round one Teagle report submitted to the Teagle Foundation, including complete final reports by participating departments, provostial representatives, and institutional research officers. Teagle IR representatives travel to Minneapolis for HEDS conference to present results of Teagle project, “Models of Collaboration: Intra- and inter-institutional, for purposes of enhancing institutional effectiveness.” |

**Round one departments conclude work / Round two departments begin work (2012-2013)**

| September 2012   | On-campus meeting (each college’s faculty, IR, and Provostial staff) to begin developing departmental learning goal statements and assessment strategies (1.5 hours). |
| September – November 2012 | Participating faculty and their departments work with IR and Provostial representatives to develop and refine departmental learning goals and assessment strategies. |
| November 2012    | On-campus meeting (each college’s faculty, IR, and Provostial staff) to continue to develop and critique departmental learning goal statements and assessment strategies (1.5 hours). |
| December 2012    | Final learning goals and assessment strategies submitted.                                                                                     |
| January 2013     | On-campus meeting (each college’s faculty, IR, and Provostial staff) to discuss and plan the development of measures (1.5 hours).                    |
| January – April 2013 | Participating faculty and their departments work with IR and Provostial representatives to finalize assessment strategies, develop measures, and update campus colleagues about project status / progress. |
| March 2013       | On-campus meeting (each college’s faculty, IR, and Provostial staff) to finalize and critique the development of measures (1.5 hours).                   |
| April 2013       | Year one Tri-College retreat. Share and critique departmental learning goal statements, assessment strategies, measures. (2.5 hours)                  |
May 2013  Participating faculty and their departments submit formal statements of
departmental learning goals, assessment strategies, and measures.

June 2013  Brief report (1-2 pages) on activities, and full expense report to the Teagle
Foundation.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year 2 (2013-2014)</th>
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| September 2013 – May 2014 | Assessment data gathering and analysis (several departments may choose to
assess cumulative activities that conclude in Spring 2014). Update / status report
to campus colleagues. |
| October 2013 | On-campus meeting (each college’s faculty, IR, and Provostial staff) to report
on implementation of data gathering and analysis (1 hour). |
| March 2014 | On-campus meeting (each college’s faculty, IR, and Provostial staff) to report
on implementation of data gathering and analysis (1 hour). |
| April 2014 | Second Tri-college Teagle retreat to share examples of assessment data
gathering, analysis, and change recommendations (2 hours). |
| June 2014 | Brief report (1-2 pages) on activities, and full expense report to the Teagle
Foundation. |

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<th>Year 3 (Fall 2014)</th>
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| June 2014 – October 2014 | Departments submit final assessment reports, documenting data analysis and
any recommended changes. |
| November 2014 | Final Tri-college retreat, sharing completed assessment projects. Update / status
report to campus colleagues. |
| December 2014 | Brief final report (1-2 pages) on activities, and full expense report to the Teagle
Foundation. |

Thank you for considering this reallocation request. Again, we are very pleased with the success of the
original project, as I am sure is plain given our efforts to replicate it, and we are very grateful to the
Teagle Foundation for the support.

Sincerely,

Mark A. Freeman
Director
Institutional Research, Planning, and Assessment
Bryn Mawr College

Encl: Proposed reallocation budget, Provost’s letters of support
<table>
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<th>First</th>
<th>Last</th>
<th>Academic / Staff Department</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Rd 1 faculty partic.</th>
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<th>Other Tri-Co Faculty</th>
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### Rubric for evaluating Projects

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The department has articulated student learning goals.</td>
<td>Problematic</td>
<td>There is no evidence of discussion or agreement on learning goals.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>A discussion took place, and there is a list of student learning goals.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>A meaningful discussion resulted in a comprehensive list of goals that are worded in terms of what a student will be able to do.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Specific learning objectives are stated that reflect each goal that will be assessed.</td>
<td>Problematic</td>
<td>The learning objectives, or the relationship between the objectives and the learning goals, are unclear.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Learning objectives follow from the learning goal selected for assessment.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Learning objectives clearly follow from the learning goal selected for assessment, and are meaningful and measurable.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategies used to achieve learning objectives are identified.</td>
<td>Problematic</td>
<td>Strategies are not clear.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>The project identifies the strategies used to achieve the objectives.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>The strategies used are clear, and follow naturally from the objectives.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Direct Assessment is used.</td>
<td>Problematic</td>
<td>The measures reported are indirect only.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>One or more of the measures described in the project can be considered to be direct assessment.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>One or more of the measures detailed in the project clearly constitute direct assessment.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Project leaders have discussed project and its findings with others.</td>
<td>Problematic</td>
<td>Little or no discussion seems to have occurred.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Members of the department have discussed the project fully.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Members of the department have discussed the project fully. Discussions with others on campus are taking place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project makes explicit recommendations for change in curricular practices, goals, or process.</td>
<td>Problematic</td>
<td>It is not clear that the results of assessment are being used to inform practice, or to revise goals or process.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Implications of the assessments were discussed, as are courses of action to facilitate improvement of any deficits discovered.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Specific changes to improve student learning (or to revise goals or process) are identified which follow clearly from the results of the assessments. Plans for follow-up are clear.</td>
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From my perspective, Round One of the Teagle Project has been quite successful both in the direct impact of the three assessment projects on Bryn Mawr's curriculum and in helping the administration understand the important ingredients for successful and sustainable assessment at the departmental level. Below are the four most important things that I have learned from a “Provostial perspective.”

**Learning Goals:** By far the most beneficial element of the assessment loop for our departments is engaging in the process of establishing departmental learning goals. Simply articulating these goals and getting faculty to reflect on them produces immediate changes to the way that faculty approach teaching and learning. Even if no assessment data is collected, the act of articulating goals creates improvement, as faculty immediately begin to try to help students meet those goals. In addition, the conversations among department members in reaching agreement on these goals have been among the most engaging and meaningful ones that have occurred in a long time for most departments.

**Cross-Departmental Conversations:** Faculty members do not often have the time to sit together with members of other departments and learn about the other departments’ curriculum, disciplinary pedagogy, and field-specific biases and preferences. Having the opportunity to do this on occasion is quite illuminating and can be a powerful impetus for reflection, understanding and even change, for both the department who is explaining their approach and the department who is listening and questioning that approach. In our work, some of the most important contributions to good assessment projects came from cross-departmental exchanges.

**Flexibility:** Provosts and Institutional Researchers need to be flexible to meet departments where they are, and to support departments in creating assessment projects that are seen as useful by the departments. If a department does not see the importance of asking the question, or isn’t curious about the answer, the assessment will never stick. In addition, faculty time is incredibly precious so the amount of effort required to get the assessment information needs to be matched to the value of the information to the department. The actual assessment strategy needs to be doable and must fit the ethos and data/information comfort-level of the department. Finally, the IR support to the department assessment efforts needs to be “just in time” and “just enough.” To get this right takes some pretty special Institutional Researchers and the TriCo is very fortunate in that each institution has personnel who are able to provide just the right kind of support. This is a crucial ingredient to success.

**Lasting Effects:** It seemed to me that the departments who participated in this project got a great deal from the experience and that they now approach their work
a bit differently. I suspect that each of the three departments will continue to approach assessment differently and with varying levels of enthusiasm, but all will continue to “do assessment” in some form going forward. I also believe (and have preliminary data to suggest) they will “do assessment” better and more thoughtfully as a result of participating in this process. So, while many departments may not sustain the same level of assessment intensity as they did during the grant period, the grant will continue to affect these departments positively for some time to come. I believe that this supports our model of focusing on a small number of departments at a time, working with them individually to develop assessment projects that make sense to them, and then giving them time and space (beyond the grant intensive assessment period) to continue on their own.
At the end of three years of the first-round of the Tri-College student learning assessment project sponsored by the Teagle Foundation, “Sustaining Department Level Assessment of Student Learning,” the Haverford Provost and Associate Provost offer the following reflections on this project. The hope is that these reflections will help frame conversation and forward progress on second-round initiatives already underway, and serve to demonstrate our endorsement of such institutional initiatives in the future.

From the Provost:

The Teagle-funded student assessment project was from beginning to end faculty-driven. Departments were asked to volunteer their participation rather than being directed or invited to participate from the administration. Departmental projects were departmentally determined and were driven by departmental goals and objectives. These were bottom-up rather than top-down processes. We endorse this structure moving forward.

I was initially skeptical about the merits of student learning assessment projects of this kind, so it was important to fashion departmentally designed projects that met specific and limited departmental goals. The projects in the Teagle Round One initiative were diverse, centering on issues germane to the individualized needs of the departments who undertook them. The specificity of project design contributed to project success, as did the collaborative support provided by or coordinated by the Associate Provost and Institutional Research leadership.

Dissemination of project progress and outcome was deemed critical from the beginning of the Teagle Round One initiative. To this end, the Provost's Office facilitated awareness and conversations around the departmental projects through faculty meeting announcements, departmental chairs meeting discussion, and a faculty luncheon presentation. Tri-College conversations were facilitated through multiple meetings of the Tri-College Provosts and IR-teams in order to assure Tri-College coordination around student learning assessment projects and priorities. The back and forth between leadership from participating campuses – faculty, IR-teams, and Provosts – revealed differences and similarities in approaches to student learning assessment and kept campuses apprised of challenges and progress on each campus. This feature of the project has also been critical.

Several accomplishments from the Round-One Teagle initiative are worth highlighting. First, through the “organic” process of faculty buy-in and with Provost Office support, all departments have articulated learning goals in writing. Second, as a consequence of a coordinated project with the Educational Policy Committee, all departments have addressed core components of the senior capstone project and the Educational Policy Committee is working towards establishing a set of institutional expectations surrounding the senior project/thesis as a learning assessment tool. And finally, through the initiative and opportunity created by the Teagle grant, there is
renewed and invigorated departmental awareness of the benefit of student learning assessment and the need to clearly define goals and measure outcomes. Haverford’s affinity for these initiatives is represented by our eagerness to support an additional department in Teagle Round 2 through resources provided by the Provost’s Office.

The success of the Teagle project provides positive momentum for assessment initiatives moving forward. I am an advocate for directed assessment projects of this kind. Thanks is owed to the initiative and stewardship of the collective Tri-College IR team in planning and organizing the grant-related retreats and multiple Tri-College provost meetings, in providing assistance and guidance to participating faculty, and in keeping a close eye on forward project sustainability.

From the Associate Provost:

As the “on-the-ground” Provost’s representative on the project (and a faculty participant), I had several distinct responsibilities, but my primary role as Provostial representative was to translate the Provost’s leadership into practice. It was crucial to communicate with-faculty participants regarding project expectations, and facilitate access to the Provost’s office resources to support these faculty projects. In addition, in my role as the primary college “Assessment Officer,” I was in a position to transfer lessons from the Teagle project to the faculty as a whole, and to help implement more widely some of the recommendations that arose out of the Teagle project. As a result of participation on the project, student learning assessment functions have been regularized as a key component of the Associate Provost’s role, which will serve to sustain momentum on student learning assessment activities beyond the duration of the Teagle funding (and my own term as Associate Provost, which is concluding this year).

The Provost team has led the faculty in discussion of assessment issues, focusing on the Teagle-sponsored projects as examples of sustainable department-level assessment. We are continuing to incorporate assessment issues in the faculty discourse surrounding teaching and learning, and have just completed a project whereby all departments submitted learning goal statements that will be posted to a newly developed Institutional Effectiveness website (and departmental webpages). I created and circulated an Assessment Resources document to familiarize the faculty with the lexicon of assessment in support of this project. An important point for the faculty to realize was that “observable” (in assessment language) needn’t be quantitative or standardized (concerns that always surround discussions of assessment).

Many departmental learning goals involve the acquisition of skills, habits of mind, and disciplinary mastery that are best measured after students leave Haverford. These goals highlight the importance of departments’ obtaining information from students after they leave Haverford in order to assess the lasting impact of what they have learned. While several institutional protocols to collect and maintain accurate contact information on recent alumni are already in place, our assessment projects revealed the additional opportunity for Academic Department collaboration and benefit in this process. Recognizing the special relationship between students and their academic departments, we instituted the practice of having all academic departments (through their administrative support staff) ask a few targeted outcomes questions and also acquire contact information for students just prior to graduation, for the purposes of follow-up for student learning assessment inquiries. In this manner, we are
encouraging departments to evaluate achievement of learning goals that outlast the students’ time at Haverford.

As institutions like ours are asked for increased transparency of assessment efforts, it is crucial for excellent liberal arts colleges to take a leadership role in establishing appropriate assessment practices, on our own terms. I will continue to advocate for thoughtful and meaningful assessment of student learning as I transition out of the Associate Provost role and return to the faculty.
Good afternoon and welcome to Swarthmore. I am grateful as always to our Tri-College partners, Haverford College and Bryn Mawr College, but also want to especially welcome our non-TriCo guests: Eastern University, Gettysburg College, Immaculata University and St. Joseph’s University. Given that the topic is assessment of student learning, it is fair to say that we all have a lot to learn from one another, and it is a pleasure to have as many great minds working together.

It is pleasure to have you all hear to discuss a topic that is of great importance to us all: answering the questions: what are the goals of the fabulously rich educational experiences that we provide to our students, and how do we know that we are achieving them? While we have been engaged in this process institutionally for a while, our efforts were given a significant boost when the Tri-Colleges received a grant from the Teagle Foundation to support the establishment of cohorts of faculty from each campus who can focus on assessment in a setting that provides both lots of support for one another and some focused administrative support from IR directors and the Provost’s Offices. The results, as we will learn this afternoon have been quite heartening, and at the end of our time together, we will be announcing the next set of cohorts that will receive Teagle support.

The most important institutional lesson that we have learned over the past several years has been the invaluable role that Teagle participants have played as
ambassadors to their faculty colleagues. Over the past year, here at Swarthmore, we have been engaged in the process of training all departments to begin the process of establishing course and program level goals. For many faculty, this has been a disorienting experience, not because they do not already have goals established, but that the language of assessment often requires an articulation of the goals in ways that are unfamiliar. Our initial cohort of Teagle participants, many of who had similar reservations at the beginning of the process, have been invaluable in relating their experiences, and helping to relieve fears and misunderstandings. By my way of thinking, what we are really asking faculty and departments to do is to be self-reflective and then engage in discussion about what we hope to accomplish in the curriculum. What makes me a believer in the assessment process is just this opening to both reflect on our aspirations and to provide an opportunity to learn from one another as fellow travelers in the journey to provide the most rewarding educational experiences for our students. I hope that this afternoon’s session will be one more step along that path.

Before turning over the floor to Mark, I want to acknowledge our Tri-College partners in the form of my fellow Provosts, Kim Cassidy from Bryn Mawr College and Linda Bell from Haverford College, along with the Associate Provost from Haverford College, Wendy Sternberg. I also owe a great deal of gratitude to
Swarthmore’s Associate Provost, Patricia Reilly, who is unable to be with us today. Thank you again for coming.
Teagle Tri-College Assessment Grant  
Associate Provost Summary – End of Year 3  
Swarthmore College

Joining this project in its third and final year has given me a unique perspective on its impact on the participating departments and the Colleges. As a regular faculty member prior to my appointment as Associate Provost beginning in fall 2011, I was somewhat familiar with the Teagle projects from campus discussions, but was not fully aware of the scope of the work. At our institutional team meeting in October, 2011 we recapped the previous two years of work, and I learned how Swarthmore’s participating departments were making use of their findings. Clearly, our faculty participants had learned a lot about assessment, and were comfortable using its framework and terminology in their discussion. They were realistic about their results, and their conversation focused on teaching.

My first exposure to the full range of projects was at our Tri-Co retreat at Haverford College on November 4th, when we had a delightful session of short (10-minute) presentations from each of the nine participating departments. It was fascinating to hear the different approaches, outcomes, and plans going forward. The lively and frank discussion at that meeting reflected a good understanding of assessment and its challenges and benefits, even among the few participants who had just stepped in at Year 3 (because of leave schedules). This may have reflected the involvement of the departments in the projects, beyond just the original project leaders.

During the fall semester Swarthmore embarked on an effort to reinvigorate our assessment process by revisiting the first step in the process – articulating departmental goals and objectives for student learning. The enthusiastic and universal endorsement of the Teagle participants in the value of this goal-setting made them obvious spokespersons to turn to for help with this work. Teagle project participants from all three colleges attended chairs’ meetings to share their experiences with goal-setting within their departments. As our chairs envisioned working with their departments on this process, it was a real benefit for them to hear and ask about Teagle participants' firsthand experiences.

As we proceeded with our institutional work through the year, another real benefit of the Teagle project became clear. Throughout the spring we visited each department to talk about articulating goals and objectives, and discussions at most of these meetings turned to the assessment work beyond goal setting. Having our experiences with the Teagle projects to draw on proved to be a valuable resource in addressing faculty members’ questions and concerns.
At a spring institutional Teagle team meeting, our participants were able to advise us about our future work on assessment projects. They were generally positive about their experiences and did not suggest substantial changes about our approach going forward.

Although I was out of the country and unable to attend our Tri-Co Assessment Forum, I have heard positive remarks from non-Teagle participants who’d had the opportunity to come and hear about the projects, and ask questions during round table discussions. One of our College’s attendees is a current chair who has volunteered to participate in our next round of projects, including when he will be on leave during the first year.

Overall, Swarthmore’s participation in the Tri-College Teagle project has been a very positive experience. It has given us a “toolbox” of approaches to draw on, strengthened Tri-College relationships around this topic, initiated a group of faculty experts who will provide leadership to other faculty members, and provided many useful experiences that we will be able to draw on as we support assessment on our campuses going forward.

Patricia Reilly
Associate Provost
Swarthmore College
May 21, 2012
Sustaining Department-Level Assessment of Student Learning: A Teagle-Funded Collaboration

BRYN MAWR COLLEGE

Mark Freeman, Director of IR, Planning, and Assessment

HAVERFORD COLLEGE

Cathy Fennell, Director of IR

Alex Norquist, Associate Professor of Chemistry

SWARTHMORE COLLEGE

Robin Huntington Shores, Director of IR

HEDS Annual Conference
Minneapolis, Minnesota, June 18, 2012

I. Overview of the Teagle Grant
   • "Systematic Improvement“
   • Effective AND Sustainable Assessment
   • Timeline (structure, components, timing)

II. Assessment project overview
   • Departmental participants and faculty projects
   • Example from a participating department

III. Stakeholder relationships and sustainability

IV. What we learned about assessment in the context of
   • IR-faculty collaboration
   • IR-Provost collaboration

V. Q&A
Similar to many other Teagle Systematic Improvement projects

- **Institutional collaboration** is central.
- Emphasis is on **closing the loop**: using assessment results for institutional improvement.
- **Dissemination of findings is key**: changing institutional cultures around assessment, both internally and externally.

[Diagram showing the cycle of institutional improvement with steps such as Articulating Learning Goals & Objectives, Applying Teaching & Learning Strategies, and Assessment of Learning to facilitate continuous improvement.]
Gear 1: Effective assessment = Positive Faculty experience with direct assessment of learning goals. Therefore, this Grant:
- Limited project scope to assessing a single student learning goal in a substantial project of the Department’s choosing
- Provided Departments with:
  - a structure within which to work
  - a direct, personal experience with the full assessment loop
  - administrative support for the execution of the project
  - a “safe place” to ask questions, share unexpected results
  - incentives: stipend for the faculty lead (and food!)

Gear 2: Sustainable Assessment = institutionally supported assessment. Therefore, this Grant provided:
- Variety of approaches to consider: Nine distinctive departmental case studies to develop, execute, and analyze
- Time, space, and the requirement for metacognition on sustainability
- Commitment from faculty, Provosts, and IR officers to take part in the conversation

Small advances in gear 1 leads to advancement of gear 2, with the combined motion facilitating forward progress in Gear 3: growth of an organic culture of assessment.

Note that the visual also reflects how positive faculty experience with assessment (gear 1) can also directly grow the culture (gear 3, although the arrow would rotate in the opposite direction), but this in turn encourages leadership decisions in support of assessment (gear 2), which further fuels positive faculty experience with direct assessment.

Small advancements in one of the cogs "feeds" momentum in the others. Growth could also be thought of as the gears becoming larger.
With the dual goals of effectiveness and sustainability, we structured all aspects of the grant mindful of the overarching goal of building a culture of assessment (advancing/growing gear 3).

In the grant timeline, you can see components of the assessment loop in terms of the faculty activities:
- developing learning goals,
- developing measures/gathering data/analyzing results, and
- using those results to improve pedagogy and curriculum (closing the loop)

and in the retreat themes, timed to coincide with and support the work the faculty were undertaking
- Retreat I: defining goals
- Retreat II: developing measures
- Retreat II, at the beginning of year 2, while the faculty were undertaking their assessments, we began working on the sustainability portion of the grant. Here we experienced an "awkward silence" that we’ll address subsequently.
- Through Retreats IV and V, we experienced forward momentum in all three interrelated gears.
- Retreat VI was our regional assessment forum, to which all Tri-Co faculty were invited as well as colleagues from area colleges and universities--designed to both close the loop on the Grant project and further build the collective culture of assessment by sharing our results

While not noted on the timeline, the grant expectations also included:
- faculty participants engaging their own departments in discussions of goals, measures, assessment results and potential improvements. They were the departmental *leaders*, but the full department was involved.
- faculty participants annually reporting to campus colleagues (forums varied--faculty meetings, assemblies of faculty leaders such as Department Chair meetings, topical faculty luncheons)
- faculty participants sharing progress reports at our biennial Tri-Co retreats
- annual written reports from faculty (project-related)
- annual written reflections from Provostial and IR representatives

Additionally, and not part of the original grant, several developments emerged organically
- some faculty grant participants were invited as consultants to other Tri-College campuses
- collaborative IR/faculty teams are sharing this work here at HEDS and later this summer, at AICUP
- the Teagle Foundation was willing to extend our original grant in order to engage a second round of departments in similar activities, with all current faculty participants serving as consultants

http://www.brynmawr.edu/institutionalresearch/teagle/
Among the original 9 departments, many of their projects:

• Tapped the senior experience, while some tackled questions about learning in introductory courses
• Several evaluated writing and/or research skills
• Many developed and utilized rubrics
• Some included pre-test, post-test designs
• Some embedded assessment within course assignments
• Some employed stand alone diagnostic measures or “standardized/stand alone” tests
• Some included performance task measures
• Some supplemented direct measures with indirect measures (student and alumni surveys)

Full departmental reports, project abstracts and many of the actual measures are available on the project website:

http://www.brynmawr.edu/institutionalresearch/teagle/

During the fall Teagle retreat of 2011, round one departments shared overviews of their projects with each other and with the Provostial teams. One Provostial representative described the event as follows: “We had a delightful session of short (10-minute) presentations from each of the nine participating departments. It was fascinating to hear the different approaches, outcomes and plans going forward. The lively and frank discussion at that meeting reflected a good understanding of assessment and its challenges and benefits…”

One of those presentations was made by Alex Norquist, from Haverford’s department of Chemistry.

We are fortunate to have him with us today to share his project and experience.
Representative department:
Chemistry, Haverford College

Alex Norquist
Associate Professor of Chemistry

http://www.brynmawr.edu/institutionalresearch/teagle/
Project goals

- Articulate two learning goals for the department
  - understand the learning objectives that are actually measurable
- Measure student learning in the context of the learning objectives
  - create both direct and indirect measures
  - collect and interpret data
- ‘Close-the-loop’

- Understand the difference between program assessment and assessing student learning
- Move beyond anecdotal evidence
Articulation of Learning Goals

- The department worked together to articulate two learning goals
  - Students will understand and apply basic research methods as used professionally in chemistry, including research design, data analysis and interpretation (upper level)
  - Students will understand the fundamental basis for the structures and reactivities of atoms, molecules and non-molecular solids and the analytical techniques used for their determination (lower level)

- The department attempted to describe our expectations in the introductory and advanced level course
  - This process forced us to rethink the purpose of our courses and clearly state our goals for our curriculum
  - Learning goal 1 was selected
Learning objectives

- The department discussed the traits and skills that successful researchers possess.
  - Identify, describe, and demonstrate research methods used to probe chemical reactions.
  - Design and articulate an independent research project.
  - Critique conclusions presented in the primary literature.
Strategies to obtain learning objectives

- Identify, describe, and demonstrate research methods used to probe chemical reactions.
  - Students require practical laboratory experiences in which their 'chemical toolbox' is created. This is accomplished in our laboratory courses.
- Written lab reports are included in all lab courses.
- Design and articulate an independent research project.
  - The articulation and support of independent ideas is fostered in two places.
    - Thesis advisors encourage students to take intellectual ownership of their work.
    - Superlab experiments are designed to force students to reevaluate procedures.
- Critique conclusions presented in the primary literature.
  - Exposure to the chemical literature should come early and often.
    - Explicit assignments critiquing the primary literature are used.
    - Literature reports are included in research group meetings.
    - Analyses of the primary literature is a large component in many advanced-level courses.
Direct measures

- A rubric was designed for Chem 36x
  - The rubric stated what performance was required for a grade of 4.0 in research, the thesis, and two senior presentations
  - This rubric was effective in making the departmental expectations explicit to students
  - This rubric was less effective in measuring student learning
    - An analysis of the Chem 36x grades only showed a correlation between average student GPA and average Chem 36x grade

http://www.brynmawr.edu/institutionalresearch/teagle/
Direct measures

• Standardized tests
  • Essentially all entering graduate students in chemistry are given a series of standardized tests
  • A 22 item test was developed by the department to reflect all areas of chemistry
  • Seniors took the test during finals week
  • Performance was not good
    • The instrumental analysis section had the highest scores
    • No correlation between GPA and score was observed
    • The results validated our chemistry placement procedure

• Experimental design
  • Students in the junior level lab course were asked to translate experiments from the literature, design the apparatus used, and perform the reactions
Indirect measure

- Alumni survey
  - The department designed an alumni survey to probe our effectiveness and the importance of different parts of our program
  - The survey was designed for alumni who continued in chemistry
  - We wanted to use social media sites to collect alumni, this was more challenging than expected
  - Items were focused on learning environments, course and research experiences, and the functioning of the department
  - Analyses were performed by current position and graduation year

- 27 alumni responded
  - Superlab and on- and off-campus summer research experiences were most important to alumni
  - No trends in graduation year were observed
  - No difference between academic and industrial chemists was observed
‘Closing-the-loop’

- ‘Literature critique’ assignments have been made a regular part of advanced level courses
- Include a research proposal in Superlab (enrollment dependent)
- Enroll graduating seniors in our social media groups
- Alumni survey should be used to evaluate the curriculum on non-chemists
Challenges and successes

- **Successes**
  - the articulation of learning goals
  - a better understanding how we enable students to achieve our stated learning objectives
  - being more explicit about our expectations for thesis research
  - a ‘foot-in-the-door’ with the use of social media
  - moving beyond anecdotal evidence

- **Challenges**
  - the articulation of learning goals
  - using our rubric as a grading instrument
  - creation of surveys / collection of data
  - getting a ‘foot-in-the-door’ with social media
  - ‘Closing the loop’
  - assessing the program versus measuring student learning

http://www.brynmawr.edu/institutionalresearch/teagle/
While the faculty were busy doing their work, IR was exploring issues of sustainability, and focusing on the "Stakeholder Relationships."
We had designed the grant so that stakeholders would be part of the discussion - in the room at the same time, and in a safe environment - and in this way we would grow our understanding of sustainability. The arrows in the diagram reflect our initial take on relationships we would have to work with.

The focus of the Faculty/IR relationship was straightforward, one of sharing expertise (both ways). Faculty are experts in their disciplines and the learning goals that they have for students; IR could share best practices with regard to assessment, and in some cases provide analytic support for their efforts.

In the Provost/Faculty relationship, we discovered that even in this safe environment there was still considerable “Deference”:
  - Reluctance from the faculty to speak to “administrative support” or “structural” issues regarding sustainability and
  - Reluctance from the Provosts to push the faculty, or heighten expectations of the faculty with regard to assessment.
  - If the faculty weren’t on board with assessment, pushing them was a risk.
  - The sea-change came as faculty began sharing their preliminary results (spring 2011), and the Provosts heard directly from faculty that these exercises were valuable to their departments.

Which brings us to the more complex discussion of sustainability.

The IR team posed a number of questions to the Provosts as the tide was beginning to turn, and also attempted to discuss them with all stakeholders at our Spring retreat, 2011 [note 3 questions on slide]. Because of these efforts...

- **The extent and implications of the MULTI-LATERAL nature of assessment leadership, and the associated challenges for stakeholders, came into focus.**
  - Example: After year 1, faculty resisted presenting their work in Year 1 to their own faculty in an open forum. Faculty felt they could not endorse the process to faculty peers until they had positive results. Provosts were reluctant to compel them to do this (deference) -- first year presentations were generally absorbed within a larger faculty discussion of assessment. IR staff were concerned about meeting the obligations of the grant.

- **The structure of the grant provided IR with a meaningful place at the table for the discussion of the role of IR in department-level AND institutional assessment.**
  - Example: Allowed IR staff to schedule time with not only provostial reps, but the Provosts (who did not originally have active roles in the grant proposal), given the broad nature of the decisions that had to be made (potential scheduling of outside speakers for the whole campus; reminding Provosts about our grant obligations to disseminate findings; initial thoughts on institutionalizing departmental assessment alongside existing assessment processes [periodic review, course evaluations, annual departmental reports])

And so, about halfway through the grant, we saw just how much a focus on sustainability depends on there being a good working relationship between the Provosts/IR. ([click to drop arrow]) We had to work on that relationship and provide the Provosts effective support for moving forward - without pushing too hard or rubbing them the wrong way, else we risk losing their focus on sustainability.
FORTUNATELY, the Teagle grant provided IR with some legitimate authority to persistently frame and re-frame leadership options for the Provosts – ranging from more radical options to incremental steps forward.

Example: Provosts weren’t willing to make {big} demands, but fulfilling the grant obligations allowed us to keep gently pressing for small steps: {click}

• Continue to ask about decisions that could position the Teagle work into our larger institutional cultures regarding assessment of student learning, e.g.:
  • expanding Teagle learning goal exercises to all departments
  • incorporating Teagle-style SLA into existing assessment processes such as periodic program review, course evaluations

• The project allowed for experimenting with models and discussing how we might translate successes into broader institutional applications, e.g.:
  • addressing need for support within departments [dept assistants]
  • leadership opportunities [faculty to faculty discussions].

Success also came because the grant required a self-assessment component (reflections and other mechanisms), and this permitted us to do important meta-cognition. This ensured that the Provosts had to reflect and comment (publicly) about assessment, and consider feedback that we’d collected from faculty. Everyone HAD to think about {face!} these things.

The grant highlighted that a supportive institutional framework within which faculty undertake assessment work is critical for success. Examples: IR support; scheduling support; discussions of the role of departmental assessments.

http://www.brynmawr.edu/institutionalresearch/teagle/
I’ll make a few observations about what we’ve learned with regard to role of IR in relationship with Faculty, and Mark will talk more about sustainability issues.
Even at our relatively small colleges, the IR mindset is to establish a process that can eventually be ramped up to 25-30 departments that our small offices will be able to support effectively. We naturally try to work toward consistency, efficiency.

As departments began to design their projects, we of course encouraged use of departmental resources (e.g. Admin. Assts., existing software). We encouraged them to think about designing these activities to be manageable in the future, when they might not have intensive IR support:

- Used framework of loop in our early discussion and throughout project, in discussion and in materials shared, to promote consistency in terminology, approach, steps taken, and reporting.
- Provided examples that clearly followed this framework.
- Provided templates that employed this framework.

But they still did things in their own way. For examples:

- In year 1 we asked for two loops that each department was considering. Some gave us one.
- Some departments’ “departmental goals” were only a subset.
- Few participants followed the reporting template we provided for proposals or for final report.
- Even some of the rubric scoring sheets (Fall 2011 retreat) had two ratings circled.

LESSON:
Best practices emphasized, but at this early stage of assessment work, efforts to achieve efficiencies through standardization may be counterproductive.

Provost quote: “Provosts and Institutional Researchers need to be flexible to meet departments where they are in creating assessment projects that are useful to departments. If a department does not see the importance of asking the question, or isn’t curious about the answer, assessment will never stick... The actual assessment strategy needs to be doable and must fit the ethos and data/information comfort-level of the department.”

Our hope is that as the work develops across more departments, faculty will find their way to efficiencies and standardized ways of doing this work.

http://www.brynmawr.edu/institutionalresearch/teagle/
Even though not all projects were textbook examples of direct assessment, good thinking within departments can still result.

Results of the assessments varied.

Some projects were too simple, and some were too complex.

Some results were negative, some positive, some provided very little meaningful information.

Even complicated results prompt discussion; but they can also lead to frustration, and so there needs to be balance – the importance of discussion generated must be reinforced.

Effort to design rigorous direct assessment is a necessary part of the puzzle – inculcates a needed sense of seriousness and concreteness in goal statements. Mindset matters, even though we now realize that measurement may not be the most important thing. IR role is to bang the drum for assessment, but the best result is the department's thinking about goals and curriculum.

Provost comment: “By far the most beneficial element of the assessment loop for our departments is engaging in the process of establishing departmental learning goals. Simply articulating these goals and getting faculty to reflect on them produces immediate changes in the way faculty approach teaching and learning.”

LESSON: Broadened what is considered a good outcome. Good discussions about learning goals is a real outcome; nurturing an organic culture of assessment within departments at our institutions is itself an important outcome.
Some of our departments’ projects present as good cases studies (such as Haverford’s Chemistry)
• following all the steps of the assessment loop
• articulating goals with meaningful and measurable objectives
• taking appropriate multiple measures (including direct)
• interpreting findings to document learning outcomes
• using results to inform changes

But not all. However, even if they weren’t perfect examples, the departments still reported learning a lot. And so we are focusing on nurturing a "culture of assessment" and not hammering too hard on perfecting each step.

It can be organic, developed by and for faculty * OR * it can be beautifully integrated and reflect all best practices - but probably not both, at least for a while! We hope that in our accreditor’s view, exemplary progress in some departments will offset slower progress in others. While we still have external expectations, we’ve somewhat relaxed our expectations internally. Making forward progress requires some independence on interpreting accreditor requirements with our faculty.
Regularized time and space to talk are probably the single most critical “necessary condition” of meaningful assessment work, within departments and within institutions as a whole. Indeed we might come close to adding based on our experience of round 1 that it is almost a “sufficient condition” as well: faculty with an interest (lowered resistance to?) in assessment are committed educators who, put together in a room long enough, and supported by a little guidance on process and some methodological expertise, will do meaningful assessment work pretty much on their own.

But it is not yet embedded in other processes, and other demands on faculty time are great:
- Faculty and Provosts are insanely busy people.
- Particularly the faculty are sufficiently committed to the institution to consider serving as “ambassadors” on assessment issues.
- “Assessment” does not have a natural home within the tri-partite division of faculty labor, but is arguably part of each: Teaching / Research / Community Service

In short, the **stakes are too low** for it to happen without consistent effort to keep it on the front burner (pushing wet spaghetti, keeping a campfire going in the rain, pick your metaphor), but **raising the stakes too much** has its own problems (talk about that later). The grant and its associated deadlines served a critical role in keeping the issue on the FRONT BURNER at least some of the time for Provosts, Faculty and, I dare say, IR folk...

**Round Two RESULT:** Devoted more resources to logistical aspects of planning meetings – “finding time”.

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Initial impetus for project at Bryn Mawr, grew out of “the talk” with faculty about assessment. After the initial comments died down:

- “not to put to fine a point on it, but this strikes me as repulsive”
- “wait a minute, this sounds like you’re assessing US!”
- “I understand how this is necessary for the institution as a whole, but why do *I* need to do it as a faculty member?”

Several well-meaning faculty asked, “well, why don’t we start by learning about what other institutions are doing?” So we turned to Teagle, thinking we might as well start by being responsive to the initial flutters of faculty curiosity and “hunger” re: green eggs and ham. But in fact, what we learned was that faculty may think they want know what other institutions are doing, but in practice they seem to be much more intrigued, influenced, inspired, by what their faculty colleagues in other departments are doing.

- Best practices are in many ways (institutionally) culture-specific.
- Cross-departmental conversations are a powerful impetus for reflection, more so than other colleges...

Provost quote: “The opportunity for cross-departmental conversations “is quite illuminating and can be a powerful impetus for reflection, understanding, and even change, for both the department who is explaining their approach and the department who is listening and questioning that approach. In our work, some of the most important contributions to good assessment projects came from cross-departmental exchanges.”

Round Two RESULT: More on-campus meetings, one Tri-Co retreat per year, but... Continued administrative Tri-Co collaboration at the IR and Provost office level. THAT is where collaboration has worked very well.

As it turns out, faculty want (and under faculty governance, deserve) veto power over any administrative changes around assessment and faculty resource allocation, but they are not really interested in and therefore mostly not helpful in working out the details of sustainability issues. Thus the inter-institutional efforts for Round 2 will focus on the administrative side, and largely leave the faculty out of those discussions.
“At this stage, raising the stakes will not necessarily yield better results”. Not because faculty will call your bluff (ahem), but because there simply isn’t a lot of interest ATTM in embedding department-level assessment in existing processes like faculty tenure and promotion protocols, course proposals, proposals for new faculty positions, course evaluations. Potentially in periodic departmental reviews, but that’s a long haul as well – for the most part discussion such as these remain counterproductive when it comes to engaging faculty.

In part this is just a political reality -- directly linking student learning outcomes to resource allocation is just a bridge too far. We thought it would make the task easier – embed it in something we already do. But our faculty and provosts felt strongly that, for the time being, it should remain outside existing resource allocation processes.

• **This reality has costs** – including having to create new incentives, not to mention the pushing wet spaghetti problem.
• **But it also has benefits**: Keeping the stakes low should, in theory, mean that departments are more willing to take risks, expose areas of weakness, try new approaches. That is how we are proceeding, at least at this stage.

Round Two RESULT: Less time worrying about Middle States expectations and linking assessment to resource allocation. But continued institutional discussion of sustainability (small decisions for assessment, if not grand policy statements). Leadership, initiative and stewardship are needed to sustain momentum institutionally.

**Examples of Decisions for Assessment that don’t use inordinate amounts of political capital:**

• Institutionally fund the Teagle Model: 3 departments per year, dedicated support from Provost’s Office and IR.
• Ask all departments to discuss and post student learning goals to their departmental websites
• Articulate/document Department Chair assessment responsibilities
• Require Student Learning Outcomes and Alumni Outcomes in periodic external reviews
• Develop an institutional schedule for external reviews, so departments coming up have time to do assessment projects
• Budgeting for dept food (assessment conversations)
• Embed indirect student learning assessment questions within course evaluation process
• Encourage or require SLO on individual course syllabi
• Designate an assessment support scheduler

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Other Q & A

- How do you 'lead in a multilateral context' on your campus? With respect to your Provost? With respect to the faculty?

- For other Teagle Grant participants -- how have you managed to sustain effort/momentum after the grant?

- If you are an assessment leader on your campus, how do you teach departments to fish, rather than give them a fish when they’re hungry? (develop assessment tools, conduct surveys, train departmental assistants)

- How do you represent your accreditation association requirements to your faculty, if at all, as a rationale for doing this work?
Other faculty-related points worth mentioning...

- A common lexicon of assessment terminology is essential to campus conversation about it.
- “Ah, ha” faculty moment on measurement: “observable needn’t be quantitative or standardized!”
- Examples preferred over instruction.
- Articulating learning goals transformed some departmental cultures, making departmental meetings more substantive and focused on teaching and learning.
- Some learning goal achievement can only be properly evaluated after students graduate (need to plan mechanisms for this).
- Faculty quote: “It’s not as bad as you think!”
Tips from the trenches

- Regular Tri-College IR meetings for reflection, analysis, brainstorming, commiserating and generally “getting it done.”
- The Teagle Grant is both a carrot and a stick
- Apply a little friendly peer pressure across Tri-Co to meet deadlines.
- Website to share departmental projects and tools:
- Incorporate/refer to the assessment loop everywhere possible, to build familiarity
  - Individual Tri-Co retreat themes
  - A view from the other side of the loop
    - Retreat V (fall 2011): faculty project presentations were evaluated by all grant participants using a rubric

Rubric and round 2 summary – see handout.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The department has articulated student learning goals.</td>
<td>Problematic</td>
<td>There is no evidence of discussion or agreement on learning goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>A discussion took place, and there is a list of student learning goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>A meaningful discussion resulted in a comprehensive list of goals that are vivid in terms of what a student will be able to do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific learning objectives are stated that reflect each goal that will be assessed.</td>
<td>Problematic</td>
<td>The learning objectives, or the relationship between the objectives and the learning goals, are unclear.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Learning objectives follow from the learning goal selected for assessment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Learning objectives clearly follow from the learning goal selected for assessment, and are meaningful and measurable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies used to achieve learning objectives are identified.</td>
<td>Problematic</td>
<td>Strategies are not clear.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>The project identifies the strategies used to achieve the objectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>The strategies used are clear, and follow naturally from the objectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct Assessment is used.</td>
<td>Problematic</td>
<td>The measures reported are indirect only.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>One or more of the measures described in the project can be considered to be direct assessment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>One or more of the measures detailed in the project clearly constitute direct assessment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project leaders have discussed project and its findings with others.</td>
<td>Problematic</td>
<td>Little or no discussion seems to have occurred.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Members of the department have discussed the project fully.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Members of the department have discussed the project fully. Discussions with others on campus are taking place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project makes explicit recommendations for change in curricular practices, goals, or process.</td>
<td>Problematic</td>
<td>It is not clear that the results of assessment are being used to inform practice, or to revise goals or processes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Implications of the assessments were discussed, or are avenues of action to facilitate improvement of any deficits discovered.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Specific changes to improve student learning (or to revise goals or process) are identified which follow closely from the results of the assessment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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All round participants rated each project on the rubric criteria. These are the results.