

# **ASSESSMENT PLAN**

for

## **2008-2009**

## **Sterling College**

Revised  
October 27, 2008

## Introduction

This plan outlines the process by which student learning outcomes will be assessed by all Sterling College academic and non-academic programs. Assessment of student learning outcomes has been described as

...an ongoing process aimed at understanding and improving student learning. It involves making our expectations explicit and public; setting appropriate criteria and high standards for learning quality; systematically gathering, analyzing, and interpreting evidence to determine how well performance matches those expectations and standards; and using the resulting information to document, explain, and improve performance. When it is embedded effectively within larger institutional systems, assessment can help us focus our collective attention, examine our assumptions, and create a shared academic culture dedicated to assuring and improving the quality of higher education. (*AAHE [American Association for Higher Education] Bulletin*, November 1995, p. 7)

Sterling College has a strong assessment background, and seeks to capitalize on recent assessment success. This plan seeks to transition the Sterling College assessment practices into an outcomes-driven approach.

### *Sterling College Assessment Background*

Sterling College developed an assessment plan in 1996. In spring 2000, the Evaluation Team for the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCA) evaluated the assessment program and presented the following list of concerns about the program: There were

- major omissions in the plan;
- weaknesses in the kinds of data the plan generated;
- variations in constituent understandings of assessment.

At the end of spring 2000, the Assessment Director concluded that the plan was not working.

During the years that followed, Sterling College completely revised its assessment plan. The new plan and resultant data addressed the NCA concerns and brought Sterling College to a new level of assessment activity in which assessment generates program changes designed to improve student learning. Table 1 presents concerns from the NCA evaluation team report and lists the corrective steps the College has taken.

Table 1. Concerns about Assessment from Spring 2000 and corrective actions.

<b>Team concern (page references to NCA <i>Report of a Visit</i> . .</b>	<b>Corrective action</b>
1. New faculty should receive training about assessment. (pgs. 7.	▪ The Assessment director has met with new faculty in orientation sessions. The training is

Team concern (page references to NCA Report of a Visit . . .)	Corrective action
31)	not regularized.
2. Too much assessment data is anecdotal. (p. 22)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Faculty replaced the old program with a new one that includes               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Standardized tests</li> <li>▪ Standard forms for evaluating student learning.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
3. Assessment does not include general education. (p. 24)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Faculty implemented CBASE standardized testing for general education knowledge and skills</li> </ul>
4. Assessment does not address 2 mission statement components—“maturing Christian faith” and “servant leadership.” (p. 24)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Assessment Committee initiated faculty discussion of “maturing Christian faith.”</li> <li>▪ Faculty implemented service component assessment in students’ majors.</li> </ul>
5. An assessment perspective is not broadly embraced on campus (p. 24)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Faculty understand the new “clear and simple” plan better than the old one.</li> <li>▪ Assessment Committee implemented feedback loops that are producing demonstrable program changes directed at improving student learning.</li> </ul>
6. The college should collect more useful data. (p. 24)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Faculty implemented standardized tests for majors.</li> <li>▪ Faculty implemented standardized tests for general education.</li> <li>▪ Assessment Committee created standardized forms for several local measures.</li> <li>▪ Usefulness of current data is confirmed by changes the new program has generated.</li> </ul>
7. College personnel should use data for institutional change. (p. 24)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Feedback loops have generated program level changes.</li> <li>▪ Administration is considering assessment data in institutional planning.</li> </ul>
8. There are varied understandings of assessment on campus. (p. 24)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Faculty understand the new “clear and simple” plan better than the old one.</li> <li>▪ Assessment Director has met with administration and board to review assessment program.</li> </ul>
9. Assessment results are difficult to summarize across campus programs. (p. 24)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Standardized tests and forms have greatly improved this.</li> </ul>
10. There are no common departmental objectives. (p. 24)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Comment is not consistent with the report (<i>Sterling College: An Emerging Story</i>, p. 115) which clearly describes common objectives for all majors.</li> <li>▪ Assessment Committee created major skills</li> </ul>

Team concern (page references to NCA Report of a Visit . . .)	Corrective action
	assessment forms from common objectives for all majors
11. Little assessment information is normed. (p. 24)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Faculty implemented standardized tests for the majors.</li> <li>▪ Faculty implemented standardized tests for general education.</li> </ul>
12. Assessment data have not produced program changes. (p. 30)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Departments have implemented many program changes resulting from assessment data.</li> </ul>

The NCA concerns were self-evident at the college as assessment data sat unused on shelves, and most interactions between the Institutional Assessment Committee and departments involved attempts to modify the assessment process.

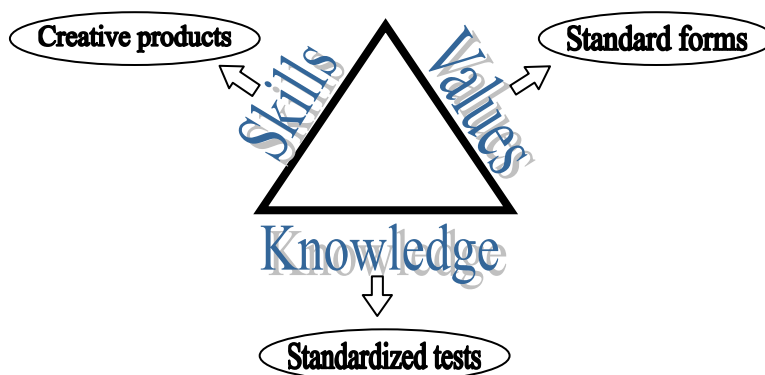
### *Description of the changes*

Beginning in the fall of 2000, the following assessment processes were implemented:

- ◆ The major components that the College needed to assess in every program were students' learning progress on **Knowledge, Skills, and Values** as established by institutional mission and program goals and objectives.
- ◆ Program goals were already established for general education and for majors. General education objectives were specified in a recent revision of the general education curriculum. The faculty had also adopted common requirements for every major and these were published in the catalog. General education and major objectives contained **Knowledge, Skills, and Values** components.
- ◆ The College would use standardized tests to assess student learning of knowledge and skill components wherever possible.
- ◆ The Committee would create standardized forms applicable to all departments for assessing skills and values components.
- ◆ Self-report data could be included in assessment but could not stand alone as a measure of student learning outcomes.
- ◆

The structure of the new assessment plan is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Assessment components. Ovals represent indicators of student learning.



The Committee has implemented knowledge component tests for 10 departments and for general education.

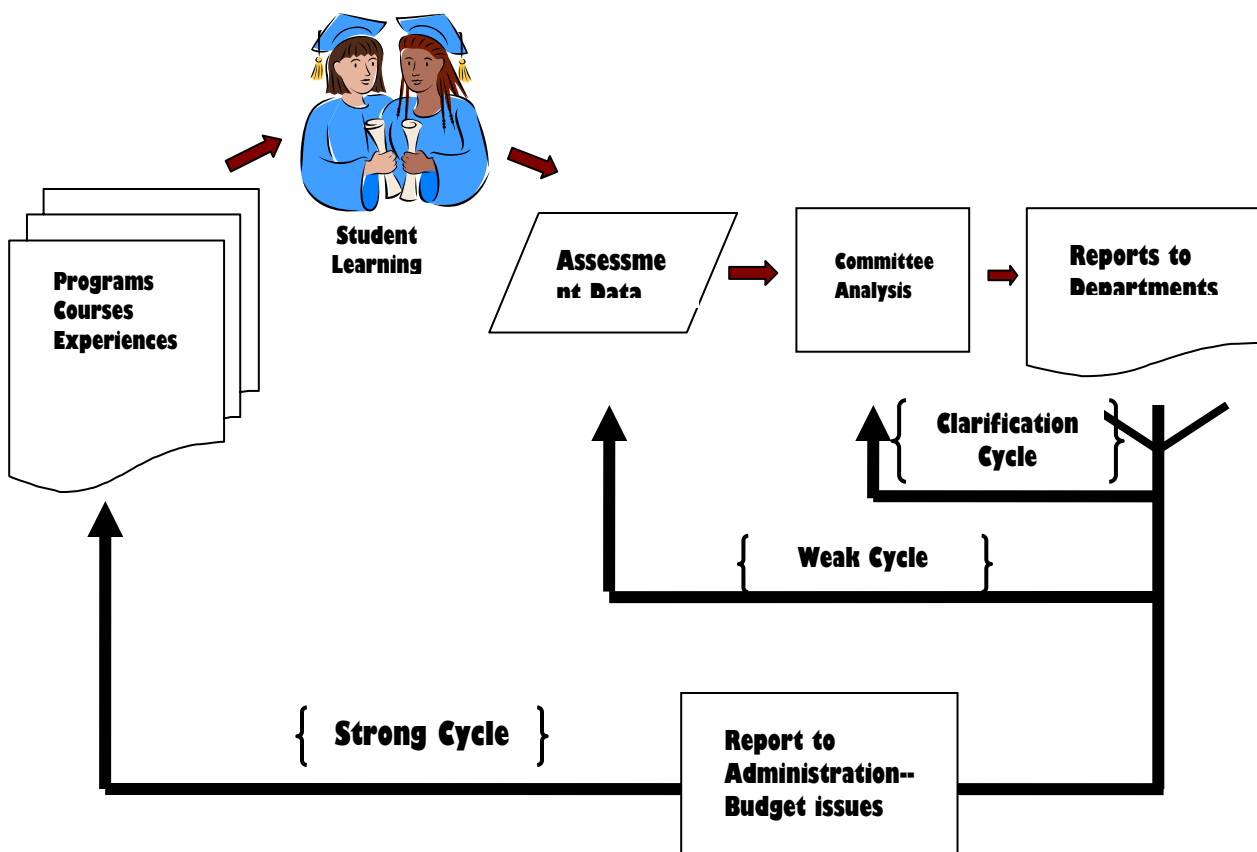
The Committee also developed common materials to assess creative products in every academic major. The materials include a department chair’s information and evaluation form, student self-evaluation forms, and samples of products for evaluation by the Institutional Assessment Committee. Every department has now evaluated creative products from graduates.

The Committee also developed standard assessment procedures for the first of its value components. Each major must provide some service learning opportunity for its students. The Committee created a form for department chairs to describe the service opportunity and another form to assess student responses to the experience

**Feedback loops**

The purpose of assessment is to inform program directors about student learning so they can modify those programs to enhance learning. This purpose requires multiple and effective information feedback loops. The new assessment plan’s feedback loops are pictured in Figure 2.

**Figure 2. Flowchart of Assessment Feedback Loops**



- ◆ Reports to departments generate responses from departments back to the committee for further analysis and/or clarification. (Clarification cycle)

- ◆ Reports to departments generate alterations in assessment data collection procedures. (Weak cycle)
- ◆ Reports to departments generate changes in programs, courses, and student experiences. These changes are the key to influencing student learning. (Strong cycle)

### ***Assessment Reports***

Yearly assessment reports from this time period are available on the College website at <http://www.sterling.edu/academics/resources/institutional-assesment>

### ***Transition***

Sterling College began another time of transition in assessment when Dr. Arnold Froese stepped down as the Assessment Director after the 2007 Assessment Report was completed in the fall of 2007. With the impending Self Study, this time of transition in the assessment office presented a logical time to make sure current assessment practices were in line with the HLC accreditation requirements. In reviewing the *Handbook of Accreditation* (revised since the assessment plan outlined above was implemented), the following statement was some cause for concern: “The organization’s goals for student learning outcomes are clearly stated for each educational program and make effective assessment possible” (Core Component 3a of Accreditation Criteria #3). Sterling College has experienced great success in assessing knowledge, skills, and values, but this plan did not directly connect outcomes and assessment. As a result, it was determined that some adjustments to the Sterling College assessment policies would need to take place.

A very intentional effort was made to not discard what had been done, but rather to leverage past assessment success in developing a plan that will incorporate outcomes. Knowledge, skills, and values were made an integral part of the revised plan to create a connection between the old and new plans. Many of the assessment tools used in the old plan were incorporated into the new plan (national field tests, CBASE test, and creative product). Recommendations from past assessment reports were put into action (hiring a half-time assessment person). The move to a new plan is more of an evolution rather than a transition.

One issue quickly identified was that the new plan would be more time intensive than the old for all involved. This was cause for concern, considering that, historically, every program was reviewed every year. As programs had been evaluated in some form for the previous eight years, the decision was made to postpone program reviews for one year during the transition. In place of the program reviews, course outcome data collection was started while the program based data collection from the national field tests and CBASE tests were continued.

The revised assessment plan presented in this document was phased in beginning in the fall of 2007 with the collection of course-objective data and the continuation of data collection from the national field tests and CBASE tests. The plan will be fully implemented by the fall of 2008. The first assessment report from this plan will be completed in the fall of 2009.

## *Principles of Good Assessment*

### *9 Principles of Good Practice for Assessing Student Learning*

1. The assessment of student learning begins with educational values. Assessment is not an end in itself but a vehicle for educational improvement. Its effective practice, then, begins with and enacts a vision of the kinds of learning we most value for students and strive to help them achieve. Educational values should drive not only what we choose to assess but also how we do so. Where questions about educational mission and values are skipped over, assessment threatens to be an exercise in measuring what's easy, rather than a process of improving what we really care about.
2. Assessment is most effective when it reflects an understanding of learning as multidimensional, integrated, and revealed in performance over time. Learning is a complex process. It entails not only what students know but what they can do with what they know; it involves not only knowledge and abilities but values, attitudes, and habits of mind that affect both academic success and performance beyond the classroom. Assessment should reflect these understandings by employing a diverse array of methods, including those that call for actual performance, using them over time so as to reveal change, growth, and increasing degrees of integration. Such an approach aims for a more complete and accurate picture of learning, and therefore firmer bases for improving our students' educational experience.
3. Assessment works best when the programs it seeks to improve have clear, explicitly stated purposes. Assessment is a goal-oriented process. It entails comparing educational performance with educational purposes and expectations -- those derived from the institution's mission, from faculty intentions in program and course design, and from knowledge of students' own goals. Where program purposes lack specificity or agreement, assessment as a process pushes a campus toward clarity about where to aim and what standards to apply; assessment also prompts attention to where and how program goals will be taught and learned. Clear, shared, implementable goals are the cornerstone for assessment that is focused and useful.
4. Assessment requires attention to outcomes but also and equally to the experiences that lead to those outcomes. Information about outcomes is of high importance; where students "end up" matters greatly. But to improve outcomes, we need to know about student experience along the way -- about the curricula, teaching, and kind of student effort that lead to particular outcomes. Assessment can help us understand which students learn best under what conditions; with such knowledge comes the capacity to improve the whole of their learning.
5. Assessment works best when it is ongoing not episodic. Assessment is a process whose power is cumulative. Though isolated, "one-shot" assessment can be better than none, improvement is best fostered when assessment entails a linked series of activities undertaken over time. This may mean tracking the process of individual students, or of cohorts of students; it may mean collecting the same examples of student performance or using the same instrument semester after semester. The point is to monitor progress toward intended

goals in a spirit of continuous improvement. Along the way, the assessment process itself should be evaluated and refined in light of emerging insights.

6. Assessment fosters wider improvement when representatives from across the educational community are involved. Student learning is a campus-wide responsibility, and assessment is a way of enacting that responsibility. Thus, while assessment efforts may start small, the aim over time is to involve people from across the educational community. Faculty play an especially important role, but assessment's questions can't be fully addressed without participation by student-affairs educators, librarians, administrators, and students. Assessment may also involve individuals from beyond the campus (alumni/ae, trustees, employers) whose experience can enrich the sense of appropriate aims and standards for learning. Thus understood, assessment is not a task for small groups of experts but a collaborative activity; its aim is wider, better-informed attention to student learning by all parties with a stake in its improvement.

7. Assessment makes a difference when it begins with issues of use and illuminates questions that people really care about. Assessment recognizes the value of information in the process of improvement. But to be useful, information must be connected to issues or questions that people really care about. This implies assessment approaches that produce evidence that relevant parties will find credible, suggestive, and applicable to decisions that need to be made. It means thinking in advance about how the information will be used, and by whom. The point of assessment is not to gather data and return "results"; it is a process that starts with the questions of decision-makers, that involves them in the gathering and interpreting of data, and that informs and helps guide continuous improvement.

8. Assessment is most likely to lead to improvement when it is part of a larger set of conditions that promote change. Assessment alone changes little. Its greatest contribution comes on campuses where the quality of teaching and learning is visibly valued and worked at. On such campuses, the push to improve educational performance is a visible and primary goal of leadership; improving the quality of undergraduate education is central to the institution's planning, budgeting, and personnel decisions. On such campuses, information about learning outcomes is seen as an integral part of decision making, and avidly sought.

9. Through assessment, educators meet responsibilities to students and to the public. There is a compelling public stake in education. As educators, we have a responsibility to the publics that support or depend on us to provide information about the ways in which our students meet goals and expectations. But that responsibility goes beyond the reporting of such information; our deeper obligation -- to ourselves, our students, and society -- is to improve. Those to whom educators are accountable have a corresponding obligation to support such attempts at improvement.

(Authors: Alexander W. Astin; Trudy W. Banta; K. Patricia Cross; Elaine El-Khawas; Peter T. Ewell; Pat Hutchings; Theodore J. Marchese; Kay M. McClenney; Marcia Mentkowski; Margaret A. Miller; E. Thomas Moran; Barbara D. Wright



This document was developed under the auspices of the AAHE Assessment Forum with support from the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education with additional support for publication and dissemination from the Exxon Education Foundation. Copies may be made without restriction.)

### *Purpose for Assessment*

The mission of Sterling College is to “develop creative and thoughtful leaders who understand a maturing Christian faith.” The purpose of assessment at Sterling College is to ensure that the school realizes this mission by meeting well defined outcomes.

### *Scope of Assessment*

Sterling College will assess outcomes at the course, program, school, and college level. Sterling College will also assess outcomes for all non-academic programs. All programs (academic and non-academic) will also be assessed for contribution to the Sterling College mission statement.

### *Consistency of Assessment*

An important part of this or any assessment plan is consistency of data interpretation. It is of the utmost importance that assessment results common to multiple programs be processed, evaluated, and interpreted according to set standards. The Assessment Director will develop a set of standards for common measurements to ensure uniform interpretation. These standards may need to be adjusted from year to year, so the Assessment Director will send out the standards at the end of April each year and will include them with the Annual Assessment Report.

### *Assessment Cycle*

Annual Assessment efforts occur within the framework of the Sterling College academic year, which extends from August 1 through May 31. An outline of the annual Sterling College assessment cycle appears in the “Yearly Calendar” (page 21). Non-Academic programs will be assessed every year. Academic program objectives will be assessed every third year—one third of the objective from each program will be assessed each year.

Academic programs will also be subject to comprehensive program reviews every six years. The order and parameters of the reviews are in Appendix A.

### *Implementation*

#### Phase 1

End-of-course objective surveys were implemented in the fall of 2007. These surveys are intended for use in completing the end of course objective evaluations. Phase 1 also includes the collection of standardized test data, which was also implemented in the fall of 2007. It should be noted that the standardized tests are a carryover from the previous assessment plan, and data is available from 2001-2008.

#### Phase 2

All academic programs were required to complete their objective alignment matrices by the end of May, 2008.

Phase 3

The entire assessment plan will go into effect in the fall of 2008. The first Annual Assessment Report produced by this plan will be completed in the fall of 2009.

*Program Alignment Matrices*

In preparation for the implementation of this outcomes-based assessment plan, all Sterling College academic programs have mapped their programs using alignment matrices. These matrices connect course, program, school, and college outcomes. In addition, these matrices also provide information on assessment for each outcome at the course level. The connection between the outcomes and the college mission statement is also defined.

## Sterling College Academic Assessment Strategies

Sterling College seeks to assess all aspects of the College as it relates to student learning outcomes. In order for this to be accomplished, a clear progression must be established that links individual assignments and their evaluation to course objectives, program goals and objectives, school objectives, college goals, and ultimately to the assessment strategies used to measure effectiveness at each level. This is accomplished through various alignment matrices. These alignment matrices are present on the Sterling College website at the following link:

[www.sterling.edu](http://www.sterling.edu)

Sterling College will assess courses, programs, schools, and the College using the modes outlined below.

### *Assessment of Course Objectives*

#### Summary of Course Review

Instructors will write a brief report on each course taught each year. The report will include information on each course objective. If multiple instructors teach the same course, each instructor must complete the report. If the same instructor teaches the same course more than once, only one report must be completed.

Each course objective from each course will be evaluated each year on two modes of input:

1. Embedded assessment method(s) listed in the Course Objective Alignment Matrix
2. End of Course Surveys

#### *Embedded assessment*

Each course objective is linked to an embedded assessment in the Course Objective Alignment Matrix. The instructor will evaluate the corresponding course objective by evaluating the students' performance on the embedded assessment as it pertains to the objective. Actual data should be included where suitable, but in many cases a subjective evaluation is appropriate.

#### *End of Course Surveys*

Instructors will obtain data from their end of course surveys from the Assessment Director. Data on the course objectives should be used in the evaluation of the course objectives. Care must be taken to account for the number of surveys completed when incorporating this information.

#### Report

Using the two modes of input outlined above, each course instructor will compose a report in which each course objective will be assessed. Reports will be sent to the department chair. Included in each report should be the following:

- The course title
- Course objectives
- Review of previous changes
- Update on previous changes
- Review of assessment data obtained from the two modes of input listed above
- Evaluation of assessment data

- Proposed changes to the course (included would be any possible impact on program objectives)
- Timeline for changes

The Assessment Director may at times request additional information.

## *Assessment of Program Objectives*

### Summary of Program Review

Review of program objectives will be done every year. Programs will divide their objectives into three parts. One part will be reviewed each year, so each objective will be reviewed every third year. How objectives will be divided will be left to the programs. Objective review will begin with the 08-09 academic year. Programs will collect and retain data every year. The data will be used every third year in a programmatic report.

Program objectives will be assessed each year through the following modes of input:

1. National field test
2. Review of skill-based assignment(s) out of senior-level course
3. End of program exam and survey created by the department (providing both direct and indirect assessment data)
4. Individual course reviews
5. Review of Alignment Matrices
6. Mission statement

### *National Field Test*

A national field test will be given to seniors every year in a senior course of the department's choosing. The test will be organized by the Assessment Director. National field tests will provide detailed information about how Sterling College students compare to students across the country. While not directly related to objectives, this comparison is crucial in providing reference points outside of Sterling. The test may occur each semester or once per year depending on how often the chosen senior course is offered. The Assessment Director may solicit help from the departments at whatever level is deemed necessary. If a national field test is not available for a program, this measure will not be used for that program.

### *Assignment Review*

Full-time program faculty will review one or more junior/senior level assignment(s), in which all program objectives may be measured (creative products used for assessment in the past might be a good fit). It may be necessary to use more than one assignment for certain programs to ensure that all objectives are measured. A rubric will be used for each faculty member to assess each student. Programs will gather and save the necessary assignments each year. Rubrics will be completed each year only for the objectives designated for review that year. Rubrics will be completed for all assignments on file not yet reviewed for those objectives. Assistance in creating rubrics will be provided by the Assessment Director.

While not practical in the fall of 2008, it is the desire of Sterling College to move toward capstone courses with comprehensive capstone assignments. These courses will take the place of the *Assignment Review* in the assessment process. It is the intent of Sterling College to have a capstone course in every program at the completion of the next Program Review Cycle (Appendix D).

#### *End-of-Program Exam*

Departments will create a customized exam for each program offered. The exam should provide data on each program objective. Please note that this is not an objective test designed to test for subject matter knowledge. The standardized test will meet this need. This test should be designed to evaluate specific program objectives. An “Authentic Assessment” approach will be used, which uses an application based approach. Information on Authentic Assessment may be found at <http://jonathan.mueller.faculty.noctrl.edu/toolbox/tasks.htm>. Included in the Authentic Assessment should be an ethical question or element. Preferably, students should take the exam during the final senior program course. If necessary, the Assessment Director will provide assistance creating the exams and grading rubrics. The exam should be given for the first time in the fall of 08 or Spring of 09, depending on the offering cycle of the chosen course.

Included in the end-of-program exam will be a series of survey questions designed to provide indirect assessment data about the program. Exams should contain a series of questions designed to evaluate the level at which students achieved each objective. Student-satisfaction questions similar to those in the end-of-course surveys should also be included on the exam.

#### *Individual Course Reviews*

Individual course reviews will also be used to assess objectives. Through the course alignment matrix, course objectives are tied directly to program objectives. Using the course objective reviews, indirect data may be obtained on program objectives. Course reviews should be analyzed for their impact on program objectives. If this impact is evident for objectives scheduled for review, a summary of the impact should be included in the program objective report. If no impact is detected, it should be stated that no impact was detected.

#### *Review of Alignment Matrices*

As part of the assessment process, programs will review their Alignment Matrices. This will be done to assure that course, program, and school objectives are all being met appropriately. The Assessment Director will assist each program with this process in May of each year.

#### *Mission Statement*

Elements of the Sterling College Mission Statement must be met by each academic program. Departments must follow the guidelines for identifying how this will be done as outlined in Appendix D. A brief summary of the ability of each program

objective being evaluated each year to meet the designated elements of the college mission statement must be included. The Assessment Director will assist each department with this process if needed.

#### Annual Program Assessment Report

Using the modes of input outlined above, program faculty will compose a report in which each program objective designated for review, as well as elements of the Sterling College mission statement, are assessed. This process is to be organized by the faculty member in charge of each program. Included in each report (due to the Assessment Director by August 15 of each year) should be the following:

- Program title
- Program objectives designated for review
- All course reviews written since the last program report
- Review of previous changes
- Update on previous changes
- Summary of Alignment Matrices review
- Copy of the Alignment Matrices with any changes incorporated
- Review of assessment data as it pertains to each program objective designated for review and the college mission statement
- Evaluation of assessment data as it pertains to each program objective and the college mission statement. Included should also be an evaluation of the results in terms of knowledge, skills, and values.
- Proposed changes based on assessment data
- Timeline for changes

### *Assessment of General Education Objectives*

#### Summary of General Education Assessment

The General Education curriculum will be assessed every year starting in 08-09. The assessment of the GE program will be done by the GE Chair. The GE Chair will compose an annual report on General education. The Chair will report on goals/objectives in a three year cycle. The goals/objectives listed under “1. *Knowledge of the world and its human cultures*” will be assessed in year one. The goals/objectives listed under “2. *Intellectual and practical skills*” will be assessed in year two. The goal/objectives listed under “3. *Personal and social responsibility* and 4. *Integrative learning*” will be assessed in year three (Appendix B).

The General Education program objectives will be assessed through the following measures:

1. National standardized test
2. Individual course reviews
3. Sterling GE exam and survey created by the GE Chair (providing both direct and indirect assessment data)
4. Mission statement

### *National Standardized Test*

The GE Chair will organize the completion of a national standardized test for general education. While this test does not directly measure all GE learning objectives, it will provide a link to historical assessment data and to national norms. The test will be given in or via GD 105 and RP 440. The Chair will collect this data each time each course is taught. Sterling College desires to move toward using the College Learning Assessments ([http://www.cae.org/content/pro\\_collegiate.htm](http://www.cae.org/content/pro_collegiate.htm)) rather than the CBASE exam that is currently used. In order for the exam to function properly, 100 freshman and 100 seniors need to take the exam. When Sterling College reaches the point of having 100 seniors, a transition will be made to this alternate assessment.

### *Individual Course Reviews*

The GE Chair will be sent copies of individual course reviews for courses that are part of the GE curriculum. Even though each GE objective will be reviewed every third year, the Chair will collect course data every year. The GE Chair will solicit the data from the program chairs.

### *Sterling College GE Exam*

Sterling College will create and use a GE exam. This exam will be created by the GE Chair. The Chair will solicit test questions from instructors teaching each GE course. The Chair will track the questions according to which objective the question is measuring. The test questions will be organized into subcategories. Each subcategory will be a different course title. Students will only answer questions from courses that they have taken.

The exam will also include a separate section that will ask higher level application questions that will measure objectives holistically. An “Authentic Assessment” approach will be used. Information on Authentic Assessment may be found at <http://jonathan.mueller.faculty.noctrl.edu/toolbox/tasks.htm>.

Included in the Authentic Assessment portion of the exam will be specific questions regarding the “understanding a maturing Christian Faith” portion of the Sterling College Mission Statement. These question and corresponding rubrics will be designed by the GE Chair, Assessment Director, and other key stakeholders at the College.

Also included in this exam will be demographic information and an ethics assessment. The demographic information will include major, minor, estimated GPA, extra curricular activities, gender, ethnicity, and spiritual information. The exam will be given in or via GD105 and RP 440 to provide pre- and post-treatment scores. The Chair will collect this data each time each of the two courses is taught. From this test, the GE Chair will obtain the following information:

- A mean score for each GE objective (also divided out by demographic data)
- A mean score for the ability of each course to meet each corresponding objective (also divided out by demographic data)

## *2008-2009 Sterling College Assessment Plan*

- Cumulative effectiveness score for each course (also divided out by demographic data)
- Cumulative mean score (also divided out by demographic data)
- Holistic data from the Authentic Assessment questions

Included in the GE exam will be a series of survey questions designed to provide indirect assessment data about the GE program. The exam should contain a series of questions designed to evaluate the level at which students achieved each objective. Student-satisfaction questions similar to those in the end of course surveys should also be on the exam.

### *Mission Statement*

Elements of The Sterling College mission statement must be met by the GE curriculum. The GE curriculum must follow the guidelines for identifying how this will be done as outlined in Appendix D. A brief summary of the program's ability to meet the designated elements of the college mission statement must be included. The Assessment Director will assist the GE Chair with this process if needed.

### Annual General Education Assessment Report

Using the three modes of input outlined above, the GE Chair will compose a report in which each GE program objective designated for review, as well as elements of the Sterling College mission statement, will be assessed. Included in each report should be the following:

- Review of goals/objectives to be reviewed
- Review of assessment data
- Evaluation of assessment data
- Proposed changes
- Timeline for changes (if any)
- Review of previous changes
- Alignment Matrices with any changes incorporated

### *Assessment of School Objectives*

#### Summary of the Assessment of School Objectives

The objectives for the School of Professional Studies and the School of Arts and Sciences will be assessed by reviewing the evaluations of the program objectives identified to measure school objectives in each program. The Summary of Assessment of School Objectives reports will be written by the Dean of each school. The report will include any recommended changes and/or evaluations of previous recommended changes.

### *Assessment of Institutional Objectives*

#### Summary of the Assessment of Institutional Objectives

The objectives for Sterling College will be assessed by reviewing the evaluations of the school objectives identified to measure college objectives in each school. The reports will be written by the VPAA. The report will include any recommended changes and/or evaluations of previous recommended changes.



## Sterling College Non-Academic Assessment Strategies

Sterling College will assess all non-academic program objectives. In conjunction with the Assessment Director, the student or employee in charge of the program will complete the assessment. The assessment of these programs will occur every year beginning in 08-09. Due to the diverse nature of these programs, uniform assessment procedures are not practical. The Assessment Director will meet with the student or employee in charge of every program to develop proper assessments for their objectives and place them in the appropriate portion of the Assessment of Non-Academic Programs worksheet located in Appendix C. The Assessment Director will then meet with each program yearly to update the worksheet. These meetings will take place by the end of September each year. The Assessment of Non-Academic Programs worksheet will contain assessment data, results, and how those results will be used for each program. The worksheet will be included as part of the Annual Assessment Report.

## Review of Sterling College Assessment Plan

The College Assessment Committee will meet in November of every year to review the Annual Assessment Report submitted by the Assessment Director. Based on the assessment report, the committee will make recommendations for changes in the Assessment Plan. The committee will also review the effectiveness of any previous changes to the plan. The assessment committee's input must be completed by November 15. The Assessment Director will then update the Annual Assessment Report after input from the College Assessment Committee by November 30.

## Sterling College Assessment Committee

The Sterling College Assessment Committee will be formed and chaired annually by the Assessment Director. The committee will consist of six members, including at least one non-faculty member and one student.

## List of Annual Responsibilities

### VPAA

- Receive data from all end-of-course surveys within a month of the courses being completed.
- Receive annual program assessment reports from Assessment Director on or by August 15.
- Receive annual GE assessment report from Assessment Director on or by August 15.
- Receive the Summary of Assessment of School Objectives on or by August 31.
- Compose the Summary of Assessment of College Objectives and submit to the Assessment Director by September 15.
- Implement changes proposed in the Summary of Assessment of College Objectives report.

### Associate Deans

- Receive annual program assessment reports from Assessment Director on or by August 15.
- Compose the Summary of Assessment of School Objectives as per the guidelines set forth in this document, and submit to the Assessment Director by August 31.
- Implement changes proposed in Summary of Assessment of School Objectives report.

### Program Chairs

- Choose the course in which the national field test will be given (if applicable).
- By the end of the second week of courses each semester, inform the Assessment Director of the time, date, and course for the national field test. Also notify Assessment Director if no test is to occur.
- Be present for the administration of the national field test.
- Coordinate the creation and maintenance of the end-of-program exam.
- Choose the course in which the end-of-program exam will be given.
- By the end of the second week of courses each semester, inform the Assessment Director of the time, date, and course for the national field test (should be the same as the national field test). Also notify Assessment Director if no test is to occur that semester.
- Be present for the administration of the end of program exam.
- Organize and facilitate the *assignment review* for each graduate by all faculty teaching full time in the program (creative product may be used) by May 31 of each year.
- By May 31 of each year, collect from instructors course-objective reviews to be included with annual program assessment report.
- Review Alignment Matrices with Assessment Director in May of each year.
- Complete the Annual Program Assessment Report as per the guidelines set forth in this document.
- Submit annual program assessment report to the Assessment Director by August 15.
- Implement changes proposed in annual program assessment report.

### Assessment Director

- Form and chair College Assessment Committee.

## *2008-2009 Sterling College Assessment Plan*

- Organize and conduct end-of-course objective surveys.
- Distribute uniform set of evaluation standards.
- Assist faculty with assessment of course objectives.
- Send annual program assessment reports to Associate Dean's on or by August 15.
- By the end of the second week of courses each semester, solicit and record the time, date, and course for the national field test. (Notification should come from each program chair.)
- Assist program chairs in coordinating the administration of the national field tests.
- Assist program chairs in coordinating the creation and maintenance of the end-of-program exam.
- By the end of the second week of courses each semester, solicit and record the time, date, and course for the end-of-program exam. (Notification should come from each program chair.)
- Assist program chairs in coordinating the administration of the end-of-program exam.
- Assist program chairs with the assignment review for each graduate.
- Assist program chairs with the annual program assessment report.
- Review Alignment Matrices with program chairs in May of each year.
- Receive the annual program assessment report from each program chair by August 15.
- Assist program chairs with the implementation of the changes proposed in annual program assessment report.
- Assist GE Chair in conducting national standardized GE test in GD 105 and RP 440 each time each course is taught.
- Assist GE Chair in conducting Sterling GE test in GD105 and RP 440 each time each course is taught.
- Assist the GE Chair with the annual GE assessment report.
- Receive the annual GE assessment report from the GE Chair by August 15 of the following academic year.
- Assist the GE Chair with the implementation of changes based on assessment recommendations.
- Assist those in charge of non-academic programs with the assessment of non-academic program objectives.
- Meet with those in charge of non-academic programs to develop proper objectives and assessments for their objectives.
- Assist those in charge of non-academic programs with the completion of the Assessment of Non-academic Programs worksheet. The Assessment Director should meet with those in charge of non-academic programs by September 30 of each year.
- Write annual Sterling College Assessment Report by October 31 of each year and submit to the College Assessment Committee.
- Implement the recommended Assessment Plan changes proposed by the College Assessment Committee.
- Update Annual Assessment Report and Sterling College Assessment Plan after input from the College Assessment Committee by November 30.

### **Faculty**

- Receive and review all survey data on each course within three weeks of the course being completed.
- Complete course-objective assessment by May 31 for each course taught in the academic year. Submit to appropriate Program Chair.
- Implement course-based assessment recommendations.
- Assist Program Chair with annual program assessment report.
- Assist in the implementation of programmatic changes based on assessment recommendations.

### **GE Program Chair**

- Conduct CBASE test in RP 440 each time the course is taught. (Coordinate with instructor.)
- Compose and conduct Sterling GE test in GD105 and RP 440 each time each course is taught. (Coordinate with instructor.)
- Receive and review all survey data on each GE course within three weeks of the course being completed.
- By May 31 of each year, collect from instructors teaching GE courses course-objective reviews to be included with annual program assessment report.
- Complete the annual General Education assessment report as per the guidelines set forth in this document.
- Submit annual GE assessment report to the Assessment Director by August 15 each year.
- Coordinate the implementation of changes based on assessment recommendations.

### **Chairs of Non-Academic Programs**

- Work with Assessment Director to develop program objectives and assessments.
- Meet with Assessment Director by the end of September each year to complete the Assessment of Non-Academic Programs worksheet.
- Execute assessment plan indicated in the Assessment of Non-Academic Programs worksheet.
- Make assessment based changes indicated in the Assessment of Non-Academic Programs worksheet.
- Record impact of changes in the Assessment of Non-Academic Programs worksheet.

### **Office Staff**

- Assist program chairs and Assessment Director with national field test if necessary.
- Assist GE chair with national standardized test if necessary.

### **College Assessment Committee**

- Review and approve Annual Assessment Report by November 15.
- Make recommendations for changes to the Sterling College Assessment Plan. (To be added to the Annual Assessment Report by the Assessment Director by November 15)
- Review effectiveness of previous changes to the Sterling College Assessment Plan and add to the Annual Assessment Report by November 15.

## Yearly Calendar

### **A Week Before the End of Each Course**

- End-of-course objective survey links are sent from the Assessment Director to the faculty.

### **Within Two Weeks After the End of Each Course**

- Assessment Director distributes the results of the end of course objective surveys to faculty.

### **Done by April 31**

- Assessment Director distributes uniform set of evaluation standards.

### **Done by May 31**

- Assessment Director reviews alignment matrices with program chairs.
- Program chairs collect course objective reviews from instructors.
- GE program chair collects course objective reviews from program chairs.
- VPAA receives annual program assessment reports and the annual GE assessment report from the Assessment Director.

### **Done by August 15**

- Program Chairs submit annual program assessment reports to the Assessment Director.
- GE Chair submits the annual GE assessment report to the Assessment Director.
- VPAA receives annual program assessment reports and the annual GE assessment report from the Assessment Director.
- Associate Deans receive annual program assessment reports from the Assessment Director.

### **Done by August 31**

- Associate Deans Submit the Summary of Assessment of School Objectives to the Assessment Director.

### **Done by September 15**

- VPAA submits the Summary of Assessment of Institutional Objectives to the Assessment Director.

### **Done by September 30**

- Non-Academic program chairs meet with the Assessment Director to complete the Assessment of Non-Academic Programs worksheet.

### **Done by October 31**

- Assessment Director writes Annual Sterling College Assessment Report and submits to the College Assessment Committee.

### **Done by November 15**

*2008-2009 Sterling College Assessment Plan*

- College Assessment Committee reviews and approves Annual Assessment Report.
- College Assessment Committee makes recommendations for changes to the Sterling College Assessment Plan to the Assessment Director for inclusion with the Annual Assessment Report.
- College Assessment Committee reviews effectiveness of previous changes made to the Sterling College Assessment Plan for inclusion with the Annual Assessment report.

**Done by November 30**

- Assessment Director updates the Annual Assessment Report and Sterling College Assessment Plan after input from the College Assessment Committee.

## Appendix A

### *Program Review*

Every six years, each Sterling College academic program will go through a comprehensive review process. Programs are discouraged from making substantive changes to their programs outside of the program review process. Substantive changes may be made in the event of extreme circumstance, which must be explained in detail by the program faculty. The review will be conducted by program faculty. The review is to consist of a report detailing the process and the results. The review may also include a proposal for change if changes are recommended. The proposal for change will be submitted to the Academic Affairs Committee for approval as per the traditional process for programmatic change. The faculty is given the freedom to conduct the review in whatever manner they wish as long as the following information is included in a review report:

- Input from outside stakeholders
- Incorporation of assessment data compiled since the last review
- Review of similar programs at other institutions
- Review and evaluation of program and course objectives
- Review and evaluation of alignment matrices
- Incorporation of guidelines and/or standards from all appropriate accrediting bodies
- Incorporation of pertinent information from appropriate associations

***Program Review Cycle*** (The cycle will start over again in 2015-2016; new programs will be reviewed six years after their implementation.)

#### Year 1 (2009-2010)

Biology

Chemistry

History

#### Year 2 (2010-2011)

Communication and Theatre Arts

Psychology

Religious and Philosophical Studies

#### Year 3 (2011-2012)

Elementary Education

English

Exercise Science

#### Year 4 (2012-2013)

Mathematics

Graphic Design and Effects

Sports Management

*2008-2009 Sterling College Assessment Plan*

Year 5 (2013-2014)

Business Administration

Christian Ministries

Art & Graphic Design

Year 6 (2014-2015)

Music

Music Education

Athletic Training



## Appendix B

### *General Education Objectives*

The general education Core Curriculum addresses the college's mission "to develop creative and thoughtful leaders who understand a maturing Christian faith." These characteristics are realized in graduates who develop broad knowledge, skills for thinking and acting, and values that arise from our Christian heritage and that aim to build a better society. Knowledge, skills, and values should be integrated into a worldview from which graduates seek to serve God and the world. More specifically, students should gain:

#### **1. Knowledge of the world and its human cultures**

- ◆ Sciences
- ◆ Mathematics
- ◆ Social sciences
- ◆ Literature
- ◆ Religion
- ◆ Philosophy
- ◆ History
- ◆ Fine Arts

#### **2. Intellectual and practical skills**

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

#### **3. Personal and social responsibility**

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

#### **4. Integrative learning**

- ◆ Synthesis of general and specialized studies

## Appendix C

### *Assessment of Non-Academic Programs Worksheet*

College Mission Statement	Department/Office Mission Statement	Intended Departmental Outcomes	Assessment Measures	Success Indicators	Data Summary and Evaluation	Proposed Use of Results	Update on Past Actions Taken As a Result of Assessment Data
<b>ACADEMIC AFFAIRS</b>							
Library Services							
Registrar							
Academic Support							

Institutional Assessment							
Writing Center							
<b>STUDENT LIFE</b>							
Campus Post Office							
Student Government Association							

Residence Life							
Campus Security							
Food Services							
Career Services							
Student Health Center							

Chaplaincy							
Counseling Services							
<b>INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY</b>							
Information Technology							
Online Services/e.Sterling							

<b>OFFICE OF THE CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER</b>							
Office of Financial Services/Controller							
<b>OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER</b>							
Bookstore							
Plant Services							

Athletics							
<b>INSTITUTIONAL ADVANCEMENT</b>							
Alumni and Cooper Society							
Planned Giving							
Development							

<b>ENROLLMENT AND MARKETING</b>							
Financial Aid							
Admissions							
Marketing and Communications							
Office of the Webmaster							



*2008-2009 Sterling College Assessment Plan*

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

## Appendix D

### *Measuring Mission Terms*

#### “Creative and Thoughtful Leaders”

From a strict grammatical perspective, the phrase “creative and thoughtful leaders” should be viewed as a single entity in assessment. That is, the phrase functions as a *single grammatical unit*, the plural noun *leaders* having compound modification. Consequently, the words in the phrase should not be separated and assessed independently of each other. Each program should require outcomes by which students can demonstrate that they have become “creative and thoughtful leaders.” To measure creativity, thoughtfulness, and leadership skills *separately* betrays the most literal meaning of the College’s mission statement. The difference may be subtle, but it is a difference nonetheless.

Practicality is often at odds with strict ideals, however, so faculty members may wish to have some outcomes that address *creative leadership* and others that address *thoughtful leadership*. Whether to write outcome statements with both modifiers in mind or only one should be the choice of faculty in each department or program. However, all outcomes that pertain to this aspect of the mission statement should reflect a goal toward developing *leaders* who have one or both characteristics expressed by the modifiers. In short, programs should have outcomes that suggest, “When a student has met all of the stated criteria, faculty can be reasonably sure that he or she is a creative leader, a thoughtful leader, or a creative and thoughtful leader.”

To *begin* by writing such outcomes at the institutional level would be problematic, for asking faculty to make institutional criteria “fit” a curriculum could compromise the integrity of any given program. Therefore, faculty in each program should ask, “What outcomes can help me be reasonably sure that a student who has demonstrated them can be a creative and thoughtful leader *in this field?*” or “What should a creative and thoughtful leader *with this particular degree* be able to do?” Commonalities in programmatic outcomes across the institution will provide the basis for Sterling College’s definition of a *creative and thoughtful leader*.

Faculty need not reinvent the wheel as they go about this task. They should keep in mind criteria for creative and thoughtful leaders that may already exist in their courses or programs. Then, documentation of “creative and thoughtful leader” outcomes that are already present is as simple as identifying them with a marker such as “CL” (creative leader), as in the Curriculum Alignment Matrix below. If faculty discover that their current curriculum needs additional outcomes in order to address the “creative and thoughtful leader” element of the mission statement, they should simply add them to the map, as on the far right side of the chart.

Curriculum Alignment Matrix

Course	O1a	O1b	O1c (CL)	O1d	O1e	O1f (CL)	O2	O3	O4	O5	O6 (CL)	O7 (CL)	O8	O9	O10 (CL)
AT 200	P,D	P,D	P,D	P,D			P,D	I	P,D		P,D		P,D	P,D	
AT 242	I	I	I	I	I			I	I		I	I	I	I	
AT 243	P	P	P	P				I	I		I				
AT 301		P,D					P,D	D	P,D		P,D		P,D	P,D	
AT 302	P, D	P,D					P,D	D	P,D		P,D		P,D	P,D	
AT 315				I,P	I				I		I				
AT 330	I	I	I		I				I		I				
AT 351		I,P	I		I	I		P	I		I				
AT 352		I,P	I		I	I		P	I		I				
AT 403				P,D			P,D		P,D		P,D		P,D	P,D	
AT 404				P,D	D		P,D		P,D		P,D		P,D	P,D	
AT 430				I,P					I		I				
AT 435					I,P	I,P		D	I	I,P	I	I,P		I,P	
AT 440	I			I					I		I				
AT 440L	P			P											
AT 445						I,P,D		D	I	I,P	I	I,P		I,P	
AT 450									I		I				
AT 495	D	D		D	D	D	D		D		D	D	P,D	P,D	

I = Introduced; P = Practiced; D = Demonstrated

## “Who Understand a Maturing Christian Faith”

While faith integration is a major component of some academic programs, much of the burden of *highly structured* faith integration currently occurs in Student Life Office and the Religion and Philosophy Department. In the immediate future, assessment of this mission-statement aspect will occur mostly, if not exclusively, through Student Life, General Development, Religion and Philosophy, and some extra-curricular programs. Ideally, this component of the mission statement should also be reflected and measured in every academic program. Continuous improvement over the next few years will move the College toward that ideal.

Institutional definitions of “Christian faith” (below) have been approved by the Board of Trustees. These definitions, published in an often-used marketing brochure, will serve as the foundation for assessing the latter part of the College mission statement.

### OUR BELIEFS

- Jesus Christ alone is Lord of all and the way of salvation.
- Holy Scripture is God’s revealed Word and Christian believers’ only infallible rule of faith and life.
- Logically, then, all the ways in which we live will be in accordance with what the Bible teaches so that we may glorify God through Jesus Christ.
- We are committed to living and teaching a Christ-like lifestyle and attitude.

### FAITH

- We personally trust and collectively bear witness to the one, eternal God, revealed as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- We are redeemed from our sins by Christ’s life, death, and resurrection, and it is by God’s grace alone that we joyfully receive our salvation through a personal faith in Christ Jesus.
- God the Holy Spirit is active, providing us with God’s sustaining presence and power, and working sanctification in the faithful.
- We believe in the life of the world to come in which righteousness will dwell and God will reign forever.
- We accept the inspiration and authority of Scripture (both Old and New Testaments) which directs our daily living and illumines our minds, and we embrace the Church as the body of Christ and God’s witness of His love in the world.

Specifically, the “maturing Christian faith” aspect of the mission statement will be assessed through the Non-Academic Program Worksheet and the Sterling College General Education Exam. The Assessment Director will work with the relevant non-academic program chairs to establish proper assessments in their September 2008 meeting. The Assessment Director will also meet with the GE Chair prior to the start of fall 2008 courses to assist in the composition of questions appropriate for measuring this term for the Sterling College General Education exam.