To: Claudia Diaz and Michael VanHouten  
From: Michael Dixon  
Re: Assessment of the Library  
Date: October 21, 2011

Hello,

I am the representative on the Assessment Committee that will be assisting you this year with your Assessment Plan. I am the painting and drawing faculty in the Art Department. If you would like or need to, I would love the opportunity to sit down with you in person to help with your 2011 Assessment Plan, answer any questions, or brainstorm ideas. I know that advising week is coming up, but any time after advising week we can sit down and have a coffee or two. Below I have included Melissa Mercer-Tachick’s comments of your 2009 Report.

I have reviewed your 2009 Report to get me up to speed. I have include my comments as well as the steps for the assessment plan:

**Step1 – Mission Statement**

In the mission statement you describe the following:

1) Delivering a range of services that support education (Service)

2) Develops resources for supporting teaching and learning (Support)

3) Provides access to information (Tools)

4) Provides instruction that fosters information literacy (Education)

The mission seems pretty good. I would think about looking at other library mission statements to see other examples. You might get some ideas and inspiration from what others are doing.

**Step2 – Learning Outcomes, “Students will learn…”**

Your outcomes should reflect your mission statement. You have set up some things for the literacy piece (Education), but what about the other components of your mission? How are you evaluating/assessing the quality/success of your Services, Support, and Tools? How do you know you are serving the campus community successfully?

**Step3 – Where are these outcomes measured?**

Where are you measuring these outcomes? You should think about and brainstorm where you can get feedback on your services from the campus community. Where can you assess people that are using your library? Is that an email sent out to the campus community? Is it a letter sent out? Do you do a freshman survey and then a senior survey to get a before and after comparison?

**Step4 – How are these outcomes measured?**

How are you measuring the outcomes? Is it a survey, a test, a written piece? How are you measuring that you are successful in your mission? How do you know that the resources you are developing for teaching and learning are working?

**Step5 – Analysis, How are you using the data to make improvements? What are you going to change or not change?**

The result of all this data you are collecting allows for you to make structural changes and adjustments.

I would love to sit down with you and help in any way I can to move you forward on your 2011 Assessment Plan. I think that your first steps should be revisiting the Mission Statement and ask yourselves what it is YOU do for the campus. I think looking at other Mission Statements is a good idea. Once that is in place you can start thinking of ways to show that the programs you have in place are working and are successful or not successful. Let me know what I can do for you. Thank you and good luck!!

*Thank you for the hard work that went into your assessment plan. As we carefully reviewed your Steps, it became clear just how much thought and effort went into your work. There were some real strengths in your work, and we celebrate these with you!*

*In general, there were a few themes that the Assessment Committee noticed. First, it is most helpful when the progression from Step 2 to Step 3 and Step 3 to Step 4 are clear. That is, after you have articulated your learning goals, the clearest proposals are explicit in how the courses/experiences in Step 3 directly support the learning goals. And Step 4 should take full advantage of all of the places in Step 3 where data might be collected. Second, make strategic use of both direct and indirect measures, and think about whether data can be collected at the beginning, during the program of study, and at the end. This gives a richer sense of where and when your work contributes strongly to learning goals and where improvements might be made. Third, make your plan manageable! All data need not be collected annually; some can be done every other year. And you may choose not to measure for all of your learning goals right now. Make claims that you can (a) intellectually, ethically stand behind and (b) find resources to measure.*

*Please feel free to contact either of us with questions about your feedback. We want to help your assessment plan be successful in collecting relevant data to inform your work! We will be happy to work with you toward timely completion revisions to the first four steps, submission of preliminary findings, and/or completion of this iteration of data collection.*

*Comments specific to your plan:*

*You have articulated some important ideas in your May 2009 submission. It communicates the complexity of both your work and assessment of the impact of your unit on students. We appreciate this glimpse into the reality of your work. The plan is not broken up into the prescribed chunks, but it appears to have most of the required elements. Right away, we thought it would still be helpful to see Step 2 and Step 4 clearly articulated.*

*Regarding learning goals, we are unclear about the learning goals the library intends to adopt for assessment. There is discussion of “lifelong learning” (a fuzzy construct that needs elucidation) and information literacy (defined with a series of bullet points that seem measurable). If adopting lifelong learning outcomes, this construct needs to be clearly defined.*

*We also had trouble discerning what program components you offer that all students and/or specific subsets of students would experience. Here, seeing a dedicated Step 3 would have been really helpful. We suspect that you perform a large number of both formal and informal support programs on campus. Articulate for yourself (and us): what are those supports that you provide, and exactly how do they link to the learning goals you identify? This may help you narrow the scope of your assessment plan. It may also help you decide which programs or initiatives need more or less of your resources.*

*Assuming information literacy is the focus of your learning outcomes (because you continue to discuss that in greater detail), you have articulated a plethora of ways in which students are expected to develop the component skills both in their general education and majors. Two suggestions we have are: (1) limit the number that you want to claim as learning goals so that you don’t spread yourselves too thin and you have a manageable assessment plan, and (2) help your readers understand which of these component skills are measured (directly) with the HEDS Research Practices Survey.*

*To explore the former for a moment, we had some questions about whether you would have the resources to assess all of the outcomes listed in your Information Literacy Plan for Albion College. There are many worthy goals listed therein, but is it possible to assess for each one? If not, which are core to your mission, which can you not live without? How would these be assessed? Which could you directly**[[\*]](https://docs.google.com/a/albion.edu/Doc?docid=0Af5-buQImItiZGNncDQ0cV83Y3JobmZkZmo&hl=en" \l "_ftn1" \o "" \t "_self) (or indirectly) measure without relying on departments for information?*

*In sum, we would find it helpful to have the second, third, and fourth steps of the assessment report briefly pulled out and articulated. We would encourage you to adopt a tighter focus on a manageable number of learning goals. Follow those through the programs and initiatives you offer, and describe the direct and indirect measures you will employ and a clear connection to which learning outcomes (component skills within “information literacy”?) they measure.*

*Please do not hesitate to contact either of us for more feedback or support!*

*We look forward to reading how the data collection and analysis has gone, and to learning how you have used the data!*

*[[\*]](https://docs.google.com/a/albion.edu/Doc?docid=0Af5-buQImItiZGNncDQ0cV83Y3JobmZkZmo&hl=en" \l "_ftnref1" \o "" \t "_self) [\*] In assessing student learning, there are direct and indirect sources of evidence. Direct evidence is clear and convincing information about student learning, such as: tests, examinations, papers, projects, assignments, field experience assessments, and portfolios. These are particularly strong sources of evidence especially when accompanied by articulated standards (such as a rubric). On the other hand, with indirect evidence there is room for other factors to affect the outcomes either positively or negatively. Examples of indirect evidence include: retention, graduation, and placement rates (may be impacted by economic conditions or college policies); surveys of students and alumni (may indicate feelings about college experience); grades (standards and even content may differ across instructors and institutions).*

*Fall 2009: The Library has made great strides in narrowing its mission focus and selecting measurable outcomes for assessment. It is not clear to me whether there is any data available for analysis, and whether they can make data-driven plans. It is possible that HEDS pre-test data is available, and if so, it should be analyzed and used for program refinement. If there is no data available, there may be nothing that can be done this year for Steps 5 and 6. I am unsure of whether their assessment report is final or not, and I look forward to clarification and whole-hearted congratulations if and when it is complete!*