

## **“Assessment Matters”**

The Assessment Committee recently held its first meeting to determine assessment goals for 2006-2007. One focus this year will be Concurrent Enrollment (CEP) assessment. Our goals will be to improve CAT returns and to revise the current course evaluation survey for CEP instructors. This summer MRCTC was officially accredited by the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP). Consequently, assessment will play an important role in helping maintain our NACEP accreditation status.

Committee members agreed that general education assessment needs to be the primary goal this year. According to an Issue Paper by the Secretary of Education's Commission on the Future of Higher Education, “less than one-third of all colleges nationwide conduct comprehensive evaluations to find out whether they are achieving the purposes of their general education programs” (4). General education assessment is the one piece still missing from MRCTC's assessment plan. We have used the CPT test in the past, but there have been issues with student motivation and testing times.

Since much of our assessment is course embedded, we have decided to embed general education outcomes in the course syllabi of select “capstone” courses. We will then determine common criteria for instructors to assess those outcomes. For example, College Writing 1 courses could be used to assess the following general education outcomes: (1) students will write a clear, well-organized document appropriate to audience and purpose (communicate effectively), and (2) students will perform word processing/keyboarding skills (use information technology). Using “capstone” courses should eliminate the student motivation issue since student assignments would be used for assessment instead of an unrelated test. The committee would welcome any ideas or feedback regarding this plan. Once the process for assessing general education has been finalized, I will meet with the instructors of those courses. The assessment of online courses will be another area to focus on this year.

Committee members discussed the quality of the assessment being done here at Mesabi. For the most part, our faculty and staff do an excellent job. I have noticed, however, similarities in assessment information on some forms. Since our students vary from year to year, so should our assessment results. The Higher Learning Commission will be looking for evidence of a “continuous improvement culture” at Mesabi during its next visit, so once assessment goals have been met (or hopefully exceeded), please select a new course or service (or new outcomes) to assess. Moreover, HLC members will want to see meaningful assessment. For those who are already doing that (and there are many of you), keep up the good work!!

Finally, just a quick reminder to the assessment contact people that Form A should have been submitted to me already and Form B (Plan for Assessment) is

due at the beginning of October. Please contact me if you require any assistance. Thank you for your continued participation in this important process!