Introduction
This guide is intended to assist you in developing and monitoring a yearly plan for assessing your program or area of responsibility. The process and the documentation created will be coordinated and supported by the Office of Institutional Research. Questions or requests for assistance with the process or completion of the program assessment plan should be directed to Mike Brown, Director of Institutional Research, x6947 or michael.brown@umhelena.edu.

Assessment: What is it and why do it?
Helpful definitions of assessment from the literature include:

“….a means for focusing our collective attention…examining assumptions and creating a shared academic culture dedicated to continuously improving the quality of higher education learning. Assessment requires making expectations and standards for quality explicit and public… Systematically gathering evidence on how well performance matches those expectations and standards…Analyzing and interpreting the evidence, and using the resulting information to document, explain and improve performance…” Thomas Angelo, American Association for Higher Education, 2002

“Assessment is a process, not a product; it is a beginning, not an end” Bauer & Volkwein, 2000.

It is imperative that the college have a formal, institution-wide process that is consistently documented over time to serve the following internal and external needs:

- Assessment allows the institution to plan and monitor activities that fulfill its stated mission. This is how the college develops and evaluates its programs and services to insure that students are offered a productive learning environment that maximizes their opportunities to learn. (Mission Alignment, Fiscal Responsibility)
- Assessment strengthens student support services, resulting in better student engagement and satisfaction. (Student Success)
- Assessment enables the institution to focus available resources on faculty and staff development (Academic Excellence, Professional Development)
- Assessment is an expectation of regional and discipline specific accreditation standards and requirements. (Quality, Accountability)

Effective assessment should not intrude into the classroom, infringe upon academic freedom, or be incorporated inappropriately in faculty or staff evaluation.
Process Overview
As the college passes the midpoint of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) seven-year accreditation cycle and has implemented a new strategic plan, the process for creating your annual program assessment plan has been designed to achieve the following:

1. Improve program/unit alignment with institutional mission, strategic goals, objectives and core themes
2. Better integrate program planning and assessment with institutional budget planning and resource allocation
3. Provide consistent, meaningful documentation and understanding of the planning and assessment process
Process Elements and Timeline

Fall Semester

Annual Program Assessment Plan Due by 9/27/13
- Past Year Assessment: Review outcome results and resource allocations/actual expenditures to inform next annual plan.
- Current Year Planning: State outcomes, alignment, strategies, indicators, resources, time frame and responsible party.
- Responsible Parties: Program faculty/directors and committee chairs in consultation with administrators/supervisors with support from Director of Institutional Research.

FY13 Institutional Budget Assessment Due by 12/13/13
- Past Year Assessment: Assess and report on prior fiscal year allocations and expenditures.
- Responsible Parties: Budget Committee with support from Assistant Dean Fiscal & Plant and Director of Institutional Research.

Spring Semester

Mid-Year Progress Report Due by 1/17/14*
- Current Year Assessment: Review and report progress towards attainment of objectives. Revise strategies, indicators and time frames as necessary. Review current year budget allocations and expenditures to inform budget request for next fiscal year.
- Responsible Parties: Program faculty/directors and committee chairs in consultation with administrators/supervisors with support from Director of Institutional Research.

Program Budget Requests Due by 1/17/14*
- Next Year Planning: Submit budget request for next fiscal year based on review of current year program plan and resource allocation/expenditures and preliminary program planning for next year.
- Responsible Parties: Program faculty/directors and committee chairs in consultation with administrators/supervisors with support from Assistant Dean Fiscal & Plant and Director of Institutional Research.

FY14 Institutional Budget Plan Due by 4/4/14
- Next Year Planning: Proposed institutional budget with rationale presented to leadership
- Responsible Parties: Budget Committee with support from Assistant Dean Fiscal & Plant and Director of Institutional Research.

FY14 Institutional Budget Plan Reviewed, Approved and Published by 5/9/14
- Responsible Parties: College Leadership Team, Assistant Dean Fiscal and Plant.

*Deadlines pending final determination by Assistant Dean Fiscal and Plant, Budget Committee, and Director of Institutional Research
Changes to the Annual Program Assessment Plan Form
Starting in 2013-14, the IT department will be incrementally migrating the college’s electronic document storage and retrieval system from shared network drives to a secure web-based intranet using Microsoft SharePoint. In anticipation of that transition this year’s program assessment planning process will provide a pilot project for the new system. Among the advantages will be improved accessibility, expanded space for inputting plan content, and better functionality for updating your plan information. No more forms that are slow to load, hard to read, or that fail to save your entered information! All you need to write, review or update your plan is internet access and your Net ID and password.

Instructions for Completing an Annual Program Assessment Plan:

Accessing the Annual Program Plan form

1. Access the Helena College intranet site from the following link: http://connect.umhelena.edu
2. Enter your Net ID and password (same as your access to the college network, faculty toolkit, etc.)
3. From the left side navigation column under “Subsites” click on “Institutional Research and Assessment”. Once you arrive on the Institutional Research site, go to the left side navigation bar and click on “Program Assessment Plans 2013-14”.
4. On the Program Assessment Plans 2013-14 site, click on “new item”. You are now ready to enter your program assessment plan. At any time you can save what has been entered and then close the form to exit; however, when you reenter the form you will have to click on “Edit Item” from the top menu before any changes can be saved again.
5. In the future after you have entered and saved your plan, you will access it by clicking on the link for your program on the list that will appear on the Program Assessment Plans 2013-14 site.

Entering the Annual Program Assessment Plan

1. **Program Name**: Choose your program from the pull-down menu
2. **Attachments**: Use this field to attach any relevant documents necessary to support your plan.
3. **Plan Developer**: Enter your name (last name, first name) or click on the square icon to search your name from the Outlook contact list. Plans may have multiple developers. Enter the names of any additional developers.
4. **Date Plan Created**: Enter the date (mm/dd/yyyy) or select the date from the calendar icon.
5. **Program Mission Statement**: Enter your program mission statement where applicable
6. **Program Outcomes 1-3**: Identify and enter a maximum of three outcomes for your program. You may have more, but you will only be accountable for reporting on three for the purpose of the annual program assessment plan.
   a. **Program Outcome**: Enter the outcome you want to achieve. For academic programs, these outcomes should match those identified in your Program Outcome Curriculum Map and Internal Program Review.
   b. **Core Theme Alignment** – All outcomes must align with at least one of the college’s core themes. Select the core theme(s) that your outcome supports.
c. **Strategic Plan Alignment** – All outcomes must align with one of the college’s six strategic goals. Choose the applicable strategic goal(s). Review the strategic plan here.

d. **Strategy to Accomplish Outcome** – Identify the specific action(s) you will undertake to accomplish the outcome. These are the means, not the ends, to reach your outcome. Remember SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Timeframe)

e. **Indicator of Achievement** – How will you know that your strategy was successful in achieving the desired outcome? List the indicator(s) and/or assessment tool(s) that you will utilize to evaluate fulfillment of your strategy.

f. **Required resources** - Specify the specific resources you will need to execute your strategy. Resources can be fiscal, personnel, internal or external, etc. If the resource(s) are fiscal, please cite the specific category/item and allocation from your budget.

g. **Timeframe for Completion** – What is the specific time period involved in executing your strategy and when will it be completed? If the strategy is reoccurring, then specify the frequency (Ongoing, fall and/or spring semester, specific date, etc.).

h. **Responsible Party** – Identify who has the primary responsibility for implementing, monitoring, and assessing the strategy. Multiple names can be selected and entered.

i. **Results** – Use this field to report the results of your strategy. _Note this section is to be completed at the end of the academic year, beginning of the subsequent academic year or within the specific timeframe which applies to completion of your strategy as this is your final assessment._

7. **Mid-Year Report** - Enter the mid-year status of your outcomes. Indicate any changes to your strategies, indicators, resources, time frame and/or responsible party as applicable. Enter the date of your report (mm/dd/yyyy) or use the calendar icon to enter it automatically.

8. **FY14 Program Budget Report** - Program assessment plans will now integrate related budget information to demonstrate better coordination between assessment, planning and resource allocation. Complete this section if your program has an a budget requested and allocated from the general operating fund for the 2014 fiscal year (July 1, 2013 to June 30, 2014)

  a. **Program Budget Index Code** - Choose the appropriate code from the pull down menu.

  b. **Requested Item** – Enter all approved items from your FY14 budget request. If you have a large or complex budget, you may choose to enter general budget categories (equipment, supplies, contracted services, travel, etc.) in lieu of specific requested items.

  c. **Program Outcome Alignment** – Enter the number(s) of the program outcome supported by the requested item or category.

  d. **Allocated Amount** – Enter the dollar amount of the funds allocated for the item or category.

  e. **Mid-Year Expenditure** – Enter the dollar amount expended at mid-year for the item of category. Note this information should be entered with the Mid-Year Report.

  f. **Final Expenditure** – Enter the final dollar amount expended for the item or category.

  g. **Final Budget Narrative** – Use this field to report any budget modifications that were requested and approved during the fiscal year and to provide explanation for any variances between the allocated amount and final expenditure for each item or category.
Assessment Tools
A wide variety of indicators and tools can be used to measure fulfillment of your objectives. This list is not meant to be exhaustive, but illustrates some of the resources that are available or have been used at Helena College. If you need assistance identifying appropriate performance indicators and/or assessment tools, contact Mike Brown, Director of Institutional Research at x6947 or michael.brown@umhelena.edu.

- Survey of New Student Engagement (SENSE) 2010, 2013
- Community College Survey of Student Engagement (SENSE) 2011, 2013
- Standardized Assessment of Information Literacy Skills (SAILS) 2011
- Annual Graduate Surveys
- Annual Employer Surveys
- Program/Service Evaluations (orientation, advising, etc.)
- Course Evaluations (fall, spring, mid-term)
- Course Pre/Post Testing
- Certification/Licensing Examinations (participation & pass rates)
- Graduation Rates (Time to completion for a select cohort)
- Degree/Certificate Completions (Production/year)
- Employment Placement Rates
- Transfer Rates (Subsequent enrollment for a select cohort)
- Retention Rates (Semester to semester/year to year persistence)
- Remediation Rates
- Program/Course Enrollment
- Good Academic Standing
- Satisfactory Academic Progress
- Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) Professional Standards and Assessment Guides
- Student Work (internships, projects, portfolios, peer evaluation, field work, comprehensive examinations, proficiency tests, practicums, etc.)
- Customized surveys or studies (Contact the Office of Institutional Research)