

# AAACL NEWSLETTER

ARKANSAS ASSOCIATION FOR THE ASSESSMENT OF COLLEGIATE LEARNING

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT...

The Arkansas Association for the Assessment of Collegiate Learning (AAACL) has experienced phenomenal growth over the past 18 months. From a small gathering at Arkansas State University in April of 2007 to a gathering of 100+ professionals at Arkansas Tech University in April of 2008, our organization has blossomed into a 135-member professional organization. The room was overflowing as 138 professionals took advantage of a wonderful professional development opportunity at our fall assessment workshop conducted on the Harding University campus in Searcy, Arkansas on October 9. This incredible growth indicates the pressing need of assessment professionals in the state to have a forum for addressing the ever increasing assessment requirements at our institutions. Our Spring 2009 conference at UALR will offer another wonderful professional opportunity for our members to learn more about the many facets of assessment and spend quality time sharing ideas with other professionals from throughout the state. I hope your institution will send a large contingent to share this event on April 9 in Little Rock.

The AAACL recently conducted a membership drive seeking institutional memberships from all levels of higher education institutions throughout the state. Twenty-five institutions have pledged their support of the AAACL and have joined our group as 2008-2009 Institutional Members. The support of the administration at each of these schools will allow the AAACL to continue to offer quality professional development opportunities for our members. This support also sends a resounding message to the entire nation that Arkansas is serious about student learning and is willing to set and achieve high standards in assessment practices.

The challenges we face over the next decade are many. With the combined efforts of dedicated assessment personnel and faculty from throughout the state of Arkansas, we can shine as a great example of what can be accomplished with assessment that promotes student learning. I look forward to working with each of you as we continue to grow and develop the AAACL.

Barbara Doyle  
Arkansas State University  
AAACL President

## VOLUME 1, ISSUE 1 MARCH 2009

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## WHY DO WE NEED TO CONDUCT ASSESSMENT?

Let's face it, assessment is a fact of life in today's educational system. The different accrediting organizations ask that institutions conduct assessment in order to be accredited or renew their accreditation.

Well, there are other reasons for conducting assessment beside this one. Here are four other reasons:

1. Assessment is used to improve student learning
2. Assessment is used to satisfy the demand for accountability from external agencies
3. Assessment is used to improve student services which improves student satisfaction
4. Through assessment we can show how we meet, or exceed, our standards of excellence

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

April 9, 2009  
AAACL Spring Conference  
UALR— Little Rock, AR  
[www.aaacl.org](http://www.aaacl.org)

April 17-21, 2009  
Higher Learning Commission  
Annual Meeting  
Chicago, IL  
[www.ncahlc.org](http://www.ncahlc.org)

May 30-June 3, 2009  
AIR Forum  
Atlanta, GA  
[www.airweb.org](http://www.airweb.org)

October 17-20, 2009  
SAIR Conference  
Dallas, TX  
[www.sair.org](http://www.sair.org)



Dr. Jonathan Keiser  
Director of Institutional  
Evaluation  
Columbia College of Chicago

## ASU-BEEBE: NEW ERA OF ASSESSMENT

ASU-Beebe is moving into a new era of assessment of student learning and institutional effectiveness with the purchase of TracDat, an assessment management system developed by Nuventive. After researching the various options for online systems, they were able to decide what qualities were desired and what kind of flexibility would be required to meet the demands of an ever-changing assessment process. In September, ASUB issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) listing the required specifications. Once the closing date for proposals arrived, TracDat was the only proposal submitted that met the required specifications.

Bonnie Smyth-McGaha, the Director of Institutional Research and a co-chair of the Outcomes Assessment committee at ASUB points out that this online system will allow them to meet the assessment needs of the university. "In the past, we've had an assessment process that focuses on the production of forms and notebooks, with very little focus on improvement. We're ready for this to change, and TracDat will free us from the mentality that assessment is something you do once a year by filling out forms and then placing them in a notebook." This shift from simply collecting data to actually using it to spur improvements in student learning and institutional effectiveness would be very difficult without a way to easily access, organize, view, and report on the results of the assessments.

TracDat will give faculty and staff access to the assessment plans, objectives, and measures throughout the year so the process of determining objectives, measuring success, and planning for improvements can become a year-long process. With continuous access, there will be no need to wait until the assessment cycle has ended to make changes or report findings. When asked about the upcoming implementation, Margo Humphrey, Assistant Professor of Business, said, "TracDat will give faculty a way of organizing assessment data that is meaningful, easy to use, and visible to everyone." It will also give division chairs and vice chancellors easy access to view the progress of their departments' assessments. Standard and customizable reports can answer questions such as what areas are not meeting their goals, what improvements were suggested to meet these goals in the future, and what resources have been requested to make these improvements. Information such as this will be crucial in ASUB's budgeting and strategic planning as well as its upcoming self-study process for reaccreditation with the Higher Learning Commission.

In the past, ASUB did not have a system that would allow easy access to the assessment plans on all of its campuses. All forms were kept as Word documents on a server that was only accessible to faculty and staff on the Beebe campus. The transition from one assessment cycle to the next was also quite problematic. New forms had to be created and updated with each new cycle. TracDat will eliminate the need for this by allowing constant updates to assessment plans. This will make it easy to follow the evolution of each department's assessments and track the improvements that have been made over the years as a result.

TracDat training for faculty and staff at ASUB will begin early in the spring semester. ASUB is not the only school in Arkansas to implement TracDat. Arkansas Tech University, Henderson State University, and Pulaski Technical College all use TracDat to manage their assessments.

## NEWSLETTER ARTICLE SUBMISSION

The AAACL organization would like to highlight membership institutions in each Assessment Newsletter. Please email articles on student learning assessment successes to [tedderw@hsu.edu](mailto:tedderw@hsu.edu). Also, pass along ideas of information you would find helpful regarding Higher Learning Commission standards, upcoming visits, etc. The mission of the organization is to promote excellence in student learning; create a supportive network to provide professional development and promote scholarship of assessment; encourage a culture of assessment; and facilitate efforts. This can be made possible by sharing articles to be published in the newsletter. I will be waiting to hear from each of your institutions! !!!!

## RECAP OF 2008 FALL ASSESSMENT WORKSHOP

The Higher Learning Commission sent a representative to the Fall 2008 AAACL Workshop. Dr. Jonathan Keiser, director of Institutional Evaluation at Columbia College in Chicago, previously served the HLC as a Commission Staff Liaison. Dr. Keiser covered various topics including Assessment & Accreditation: Current Patterns and Trends; Assessing Co-curricular Learning; and Applying the Patterns of Success to your Institution and Culture. He began the morning session by focusing on the HLC criteria and how the Higher Learning Commission is committed to assisting institutions through the process. This was evident in the development of OASIS, Office of Assessment Support Initiatives and Services. The HLC believes assessment is the strategies, methods, and approaches for understanding, confirming, and improving student learning. Dr. Keiser pointed out that assessment is ongoing, it is related to institutional and individual planning, it is both individual and cross-institutional, and has both public and private aspects. He then began discussing co-curricular learning where he stressed that “Learning” is not exclusively classroom-based. “Learning” is a process based on three interdependent student experiences:

- \* Understanding academic content and processes
- \* Student development
- \* Identity formation

The responsibility for “learning” exists outside the classroom. All attendees were asked to pick one outcome per table and then decide where and how the outcome is learned and assessed and who is responsible. After the morning session concluded a spectacular lunch was served. The lunch setting provided each attendee the ability to network and visit with other individuals from different institutions. The afternoon session began by discussing challenges and hurdles associated with embracing a culture that is centered on learning and students. Each participant was asked to identify activities and initiatives that have been successful in creating a culture of assessing student learning and students and then identify the best strategic levers. Dr. Keiser concluded the workshop by revisiting the Higher Learning Commission expectations on student learning. He then opened the floor for questions regarding what he had covered throughout the day and other questions regarding assessment in general.

## FALL 2008 ASSESSMENT WORKSHOP PHOTOS





### AAACL INSTITUTIONAL MEMBERS

- Arkansas Baptist College
- Arkansas Northeastern College
- Arkansas State University - Beebe
- Arkansas State University - Jonesboro
- Arkansas State University - Mountain Home
- Arkansas State University - Newport
- Arkansas Tech University
- Black River Technical College
- Cossatot Community College of the University of Arkansas
- Harding University
- Henderson State University
- Mid-South Community College
- Northwest Arkansas Community College
- Ouachita Baptist University
- Ouachita Technical College
- Ozarka College
- Southern Arkansas University
- Southern Arkansas University Tech
- University of Arkansas at Fort Smith
- University of Arkansas at Little Rock
- University of Arkansas at Monticello
- University of Arkansas Community College at Batesville
- University of Arkansas Community College at Morrilton
- University of Central Arkansas
- Williams Baptist College

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We're on the Web!  
[www.aaacl.org](http://www.aaacl.org)

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### AAACL Officers

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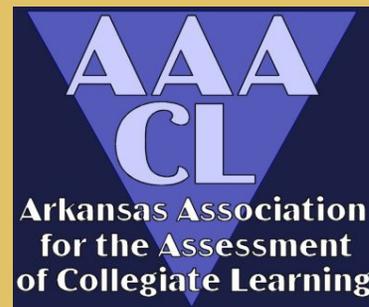
## SPRING 2009 CONFERENCE

The Arkansas Association for the Assessment of Collegiate Learning (AAACL) will host its annual spring conference on Thursday, April 9, on the University of Arkansas Little Rock campus. The keynote speaker for the event will be Dr. Bob Mundhenk. Dr. Mundhenk is a leading expert on assessment and has worked extensively with the Higher Learning Commission on assessment initiatives. In addition, several concurrent sessions will be offered to allow dialogue concerning state assessment issues and best practices in assessment.

A registration form for the event can be found on the AAACL web page at [www.aaacl.org](http://www.aaacl.org). Lunch will be included as part of the registration

fee. Registration is due by April 1, 2009.

We hope you and your colleagues will join us for this year's conference. We look forward to seeing you April 9.



## CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

9:00 a.m. —10:00 a.m.	Registration
10:15 a.m. —11:15 a.m.	Key Note Speaker
11:30 a.m. —12:30 p.m.	Lunch
12:45 p.m.—1:30 p.m.	Workshop Session with Key Note Speaker
1:45 p.m.—2:30 p.m.	Concurrent Sessions
2:45 p.m.—3:30 p.m.	Concurrent Sessions
3:30 p.m.— 3:45 p.m.	Closing

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