

*(Note: This document served as a keynote speech delivered before faculty, administrators and staff of **Northern Marianas College in Saipan** on April 16, 2004. Dr. John Rider and Dr. Ray Somera of Guam Community College served as workshop facilitators in the NMC Assessment Workshop organized by then-Acting President Tony Leon Guerrero)*

Institutional Commitment to Assessment

John R. Rider, Ed.D.
Vice President for
Academic Affairs
Guam Community College

You know, sometimes it DOES take a rocket scientist: Scientists at NASA built a gun specifically to launch dead chickens at the windshields of airliners, military jets and the space shuttle, all traveling at maximum velocity. The idea was to simulate the frequent incidents of collisions with airborne fowl to test the strength of the windshields.

As you can imagine, in the aerospace industry this was hot stuff. British engineers heard about the gun and were eager to test it on the windshields of their new high speed trains. Arrangements were made, and the gun was shipped to the British engineers. When the gun was fired, the engineers stood shocked as the chicken hurtled out of the barrel, crashed into the shatterproof windshield of the train, smashed it to smithereens, blasted through the control console, snapped the engineer's backrest in two and embedded itself in the back wall of the cabin like an arrow shot from a bow.

The horrified Brits sent NASA the disastrous results of the experiment, along with the designs of the windshield, and begged the U.S. scientists for suggestions.

NASA responded with a one-line memo that said: "Thaw the Chicken"

And so, good people of NMC, I'm here to metaphorically "thaw the chicken today." I'm here to share what we at Guam Community College have learned about assessment and how it relates to the new WASC accreditation standards. We've spent a lot of time over the past ten years or so shooting frozen chickens at windshields, and recently

learned to thaw the chicken, so to speak.. If we can in some small way help you, or any other college or university, avoid some of our assessment mistakes, we are happy to do so.

Thank you for that fine introduction.

My remarks today are intended for everyone on this campus, administrators, faculty, staff, and students. An assessment plan acceptable to ACCJC must include participation by everyone. Nobody gets to shove this responsibility aside to someone else. The faculty don't get to say, "Hey, it's an administrative responsibility." any more than administrators get to say, "Hey, it's the faculty's job." And students and staff don't get to stand aside to watch the finger pointing. My remarks today are not intended to offend you or shame you. Nor should they serve the purpose of substituting for real commitment to assessment in your quest to regain your reputation with ACCJC. Think of my remarks as those that might come from your crusty old grandfather or uncle. You know, the one who had the gall to give you a much needed dope slap on the back of your head when you were young. I'll try to do it with a little humor, because I really do want to see you succeed.

For most of us in higher education our vision for our schools is that of a critical educational resource that is responsive to student, community and regional needs in support of our part of Micronesia's long-term development and economic viability. Such a vision must rely upon the use of data and evidence to ensure that goals are accomplished and that mid-course corrections are made when required.

But visions aside, obviously, WASC accreditation standards are a major factor in each of our institutions suddenly reaching an epiphany about assessment. WASC will not be finished with us until we have changed the way we do things on our campuses. The new standards require continuous attention to learning outcomes and assessment.

As I read through information in preparation for today's remarks, I particularly enjoyed a reference to WASC Liaison, Martha Balshem's comparison between the old and new standards as the difference between the circus coming to town and the Olympics coming to your campus. The circus referring to the showmanship and entertainment quality of a once-every-few-years event, compared to the vast pre-planning and building of infrastructure to support the Olympics. The real point is that the infrastructure must be built to support an Olympic-strength Accreditation event that will happen over and over every few years. Assessment is not going to go away, and it must be based on well-defined and articulated student learning outcomes.

As faculty, I think you need to be aware of the context within which assessment conversations are taking place. Well, aside from the threatening letters from Barbara Beno at ACCJC. So let me begin with a fairly wide view and narrow down to the faculty perspective, which is the fundamental building block of any assessment strategy.

WASC's view of assessment is kind of like when my wife asks me, "Do these shoes make my nose look big?" I know I must answer the question, but I don't know if the issue is the nose or the shoes, and I know that I have to respond quickly, and by god it better be the right answer, because if I screw up, this issue will be at the forefront of every conversation we have for a very long time to come. WASC has asked each of our institutions an equivalent assessment question, and I don't believe we'll get by with the answer I give my wife to such questions, which is, "Darling, you are ravishing in anything you wear and I'd like to make mad, passionate love to you right this moment. May we begin now?" To which she replies, "You dirty old man." But the diversion usually works.

You have a double whammy to deal with. You are one of the few two-year colleges with a four year program. That means you have to respond to both two-year and four-year standards. As I look at the four-year and two-year WASC standards, they are similar.

Four-year colleges are required to perform a little two-step jig that two-year colleges skip, but the similarities are striking. First the Commitment to Institutional Capacity, then the Commitment to Educational Effectiveness. Two-year colleges are a little more directly linked to the four standards. I do have to acknowledge that the Community College Commission only a little more than a year ago finalized its new standards, and it looks to me as if they learned a great deal from the four-year commission. Standard 1 in the two-year standards is Institutional Mission and Effectiveness; in the four-year its, Defining Institutional Purposes and Ensuring Educational Objectives. Standard two for the community college is Student Learning Programs and Services vs. the four-year Achieving Educational Objectives Through Core Functions. Standard three for us is simply titled Resources vs. Developing and Applying Resources and Organizational Structures to Ensure Sustainability. And finally our Standard Four is titled Leadership and Governance vs. Creating an Organization Committed to Learning and Improvement. It's very clear that both standards ask us to do the same thing in pretty much the same way. And it's also clear that the four-year commission, when given the choice, will use more words than is absolutely necessary. Here's my advice on reconciling the two standards at NMC: Make absolutely certain that one assessment process answers all questions, and tailor your report so it will provide evidence in both commissions. What both Commissions are after is strong evidence that the assessment, evaluation, and planning cycle is firmly in place at your institution. You must have a plan and structure in place as soon as possible or you will suffer dire consequences. I think you need to have your plan on paper, at least in draft form before your upcoming visit. And I realize it's only a matter of days away. One positive move is the assignment of an Accreditation Liaison Officer for each commission. I think this will help keep the two reporting processes separate, but my advice to these two people is to make one assessment process and one assessment report serve both processes whenever possible. Never speak like you are two different colleges.

In my research for this presentation I dug into my files and ran across a document titled

“Institutional Assessment Plan 1999-2004.” It’s a pretty good plan for its time but focuses on a higher-level of institutional assessment than what is now being required by the standards and was probably accomplished largely as an administrative function on behalf of the college. That won’t work anymore. We are in the midst of a paradigm shift in higher education, moving from talking about our accomplishments through the language of in-put measures such as number of volumes in our libraries, the number of faculty with doctorates, the number of graduates, etc., to the out-put measures of what our students know and what they can demonstrate. And here’s the most important part: The information provided by the out-put measures MUST feed back into our planning processes.

Alexander Astin writes about “Facilitating Transformative Change Efforts Through the Use of Assessment” in his monograph titled, “*Institutional Transformation: Context and Process*,” (which, by the way is in on display at Ray’s Assessment Shrine) that “Perhaps the biggest challenge to contend with in the assessment process is the cognitive shift that must take place in terms of how we perceive assessment and how we respond to feedback. As Palomba and Banta (1999) explain, faculty resistance to assessment may stem from a number of different beliefs including: the notion that assessment activities are used primarily for satisfying external audiences, rather than for improving education programs; resentment toward the time and resources that must be invested; skepticism over the quality or value of information collected, and a fear that the results of assessment efforts will, in one way or another, be used against them. Most often it is some combination of such beliefs that creates resistance among the groups of individuals whose input and support is most crucial for ensuring the success of assessment initiatives. But perhaps the most subtle and powerful belief concerns the assumed efficacy of the status quo: “if it ain’t broke....” Astin goes on to say, “In many research universities, for example, it is simply assumed that current practice “works.” Under this condition, why go to the trouble of initiating a comprehensive program of proactive assessment?” And he further states, “The primary challenge for change agents is to create an environment

that promotes and reinforces the belief that assessment should be an integral part of daily practice because it can provide feedback as a means of regular self-scrutiny and as a guide to continuous program improvement.”

This paradigm shift is probably a lot easier for community colleges, four -year colleges of nursing and education and federally funded programs than it is for other programs in undergraduate or graduate programs. These entities are accustomed to dealing with the development skills that are easily demonstrated. And federally funded programs have been required to adopt the language of accountability in terms of program objectives and core indicators of success. It’s going to be tough for some of us to get to the notion of our students being able to demonstrate their learning. And for some of us, we just don’t like change at all.

Where is WASC is going? The same place every other accrediting commission is going - straight to hell if they don’t change their ways. OH, NO - Wrong Sermon. I think accrediting commissions are answering the call of industry, the general public and legislators across the country to justify the money they spend on higher education. It’s as simple as that, and the quicker you let go of all of the answers we’ve been taught over the years that relate to education for education’s sake, the better off you’ll be. Get ready. In these times of diminishing resources, more and more we’ll be asked to demonstrate our worth to the public good. I also think that WASC is moving into a more proactive monitoring mode. Given the wonderful advancements of technology, I’m going to predict that the very nature of self-studies will change in the future. There will be a time when accreditation visits are done electronically with follow-up verification visits by a small team of commission representatives. As an administrator tasked with finding the funds to house, feed, and entertain commissioners, this could be a blessing for the budget, but a real pain in the kazoo for maintaining web sites. Given the continuing flux of the computer software industry, it makes me wonder if this is such a good idea.

At a recent computer expo, Bill Gates reportedly compared the computer industry with the auto industry and stated: "If GM had kept up with technology like the computer industry has, we would all be driving \$25.00 cars that get 1000 miles to the gallon." In response to Bill's comments, General Motors issued a press release stating the following:

"If GM had developed technology like Microsoft, we would be driving cars with the following characteristics:

1. For no reason whatsoever, your car would crash twice a day.
2. Every time they repainted the lines on the road, you would have to buy a new car.
3. Occasionally, your car would die on the freeway, for no reason, and you would accept this, restart, and drive on.
4. Occasionally, executing a maneuver such as a left turn would cause your car to shut down and refuse to restart, in which case you would have to reinstall the engine.
5. Only one person at a time could use the car, unless you bought 'Car2000' or 'CarNT,' then you would have to buy more seats.
6. Macintosh would make a car that was powered by the sun, was more reliable, five times as fast, and twice as easy to drive, but would only run on five percent of the roads.
7. The airbag system would say "Are you sure?" before going off during an accident.
and
8. Occasionally, for no reason whatsoever, your car would lock you out and refuse to let you in until you simultaneously lifted the door handle, turned the key and grabbed hold of the radio antenna.

My remarks today, in fact the whole theme of the day, should be taken in somewhat the same context; simultaneously lifting the door handle, turning the key, grabbing hold of the radio antenna, and jiggling the handle on the toilet. We'll go through some old and new doors, turn a few keys to new ideas, tune our minds to a common station, and flush a

few things down the drain.

Notwithstanding the Microsoft bashing that we all enjoy so much, the question for me is whether we can pull off electronic visits, because it will require sophisticated software and proper maintenance, and more importantly will require that our information be accurate and real-time. What a concept! No longer will we be able to rely on a snapshot in time that resembles your family photo taken for your annual Christmas cards. Locally, I think it will be to our mutual advantage to wholeheartedly embrace openness and transparency with the public, and particularly with our Legislatures. Higher education is one of the best values around and I think we do a great job of preparing our students. But, I don't think we've done a very good job of letting our light shine for all to see. I want people to ask questions, to challenge, and to understand that it takes more than a payroll check to run a college. And I think we do that by freely sharing information and letting people know what we're doing.

NMC and GCC are similar in many ways..... we are not opposing teams in a perpetual combat for superiority, but all members of a common team. Our relationship with one another should be based on openness, honesty, sharing, and speaking our minds as we discuss our individual perspectives, based on a shared philosophy of fairness, equity, clarity, and respect. Tony and I agree that as we work through the coming years you'll see this philosophy creeping into all of our transactions between campuses. If there is a word for the coming years it is one of Collaboration. I think it will become increasingly important for us to offer a united front to the region about the value of higher education, and we do that through gathering information and demonstrating over and over and over again what our students know, think and can do.

And while the word for the year will be collaboration, the theme for the semester will be ASSESSMENT....

Let me tell you a little about the GCC Assessment Plan and why it works.

First and foremost, you need a champion; someone who will be in your face almost daily

paying attention to the processes of assessment. Originally I was that champion at GCC. Then along came Ray Somera, who quickly stole the title. He's known as relentless Ray. But a little more about Ray later. You have four people who have stepped up to the plate for assessment: Dean Papadopolous, Jerry Smith, Danny Wyatt, and Patsy Layne. They don't have all the answers yet, so they're going to need your support and understanding. Your assessment plan needs to come alive through a joint effort!

You need Institutional commitment! And that commitment should be demonstrated from the top. I think you have that top-down commitment from your administration. Last Tuesday evening I had the pleasure of attending a dinner on Guam where I luckily bumped into your Acting President. I asked him what he thought should be the major achievement at today's workshop. He replied that he wanted everyone to come away with a shared commitment to participate in the process; to collaborate and to help each other build assessment capacity throughout the college. I don't want to see any administrators sneaking out of the workshop today to go check the latest sports scores. You need to participate all day today. The only way you're going to convince the visiting team of your sincerity is to be able to talk intelligently about your assessment plans. And get this part folks. You all need to be saying the same thing. Assessment isn't something that can be accomplished in one workshop. It's going to take a sustained effort.

And you need everyone to participate. Faculty, quite simply, are at the core of the enterprise. They are the interface between the institution and the student, and are therefore, best informed about curriculum, and best prepared to demonstrate Student Learning Outcomes. But assessment isn't solely a faculty responsibility. And you need enabling structures and documents and policies that interlink to support assessment activities. Our key enabling structure is the Faculty Union Contract, in which was inserted the requirements for a joint Assessment Committee composed of four faculty and four administrators. We have also rewritten our faculty job specifications and

our evaluation processes to include very specific requirements for participation in assessment activities. Then, too, we have a Board of Trustees Resolution, called simply Policy 306, committing the whole institution to assessment and planning. (That, too, is on display at the Shrine) The curriculum manual and forms for course approval makes reference to the elements of assessment and student learning outcomes, and our Academic Affairs Committee is very active in making sure all courses and program documents include adequate reinforcement of assessment practices.

Soon, we will establish four permanent self-study committees to link our assessment practices with our reporting requirements. In my estimation, this is what the Commission is looking for - the robust demonstration of institutional dialog through the assessment, evaluation, and planning cycle, finally closing the assessment, evaluation, planning loop.

At a recent retreat of the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, Dr. Bill Piland, Professor of Post Secondary Education at San Diego State University, made a presentation on student assessment in which he stated: "Assessment of student learning outcomes, defined as an on-going process aimed at understanding and improving student learning, involves making expectations explicit and public." He went on to say that, (and I paraphrase for clarity) "Assessment also requires that appropriate criteria for judging the quality of learning be grounded in reality as well as in standards of performance skills, knowledge, and abilities commonly accepted in higher education."

Piland further posits that, "Assessment involves the systematic gathering and interpreting of evidence to determine how well the performance of students matches the expectations and standards of the institution. The results are then used to document and explain student learning, and to guide efforts to improve learning. Assessment by itself will not lead to improved learning if there is no institutional commitment to using the results for improvement."

There are four components of assessment at GCC that we accomplish in a two-year assessment cycle. These components include the following:

1. Assessment of student learning outcomes
2. Program review, with a focus on health indicators as a basic measure
3. Assessment of human resources (i.e. faculty, staff, administrators), their qualifications, currency of preparation and need for further development
4. Evaluation of the college governing board (President, Board of Trustees).

The hallmark of our plan is that it combines numerous activities into one process. We combined Assessment with Program Review, Departmental Planning, Professional Development, and Resource Allocation. Every program and activity at the college is assessed in a cycle that repeats every two years. That includes the business office, Human Resources Office, Facilities and Maintenance, Student Services, Registrar's Office, Financial Aid, Continuing Education. Everything gets measured within the context of student learning outcomes. Every function of the college must demonstrate its successful relationship to student learning outcomes. Throughout those two years are activities that feed into the final assessment. Departments collect artifacts, gather data, meet with advisory committees, and write reports throughout the cycle of assessment, and incorporate their data into plans for the next cycle. This may include rewriting curricula, helping to develop human resources, or even eliminating unproductive courses or programs.

Our assessment plan didn't just fall out of the sky - although some of my faculty think it did. It was the result of theft. That's kind of what conferences are all about. Putting a happy face on lifting ideas from everyone else. I say, steal as many good ideas as you can find - including ours if you think it will meet your needs. And get a good book to use along the way. We use three, all by James Nichols and Karen Nichols: The first is, *General Education Assessment for Improvement of Student Academic Achievement: Guidance for Academic Departments and Committees*; The second, *The*

Department Head's Guide to Assessment Implementation in Administrative and Educational Support Units; and the third is *The Departmental Guide and Record Book for Student Outcomes Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness*. (These are also displayed today) Ray will talk more about the mechanics of our plan a little later this morning.

We at GCC have spent a lot of money on training, and have spent a great deal of time talking about assessment. I'm sure everyone on my campus wants me to shut up about it, which is why I'm now turning to a new audience to inflict my views upon. YOU.

Funding for our assessment efforts came from several program agreements that accessed our Federal Grant for Vocational Education. In fact, I want to take just a couple of minutes to show you a videotape that came out of that training effort, and was paid for by the grant.

SHOW THE VIDEO HERE

We're pretty proud of that video. It won a bronze metal at the National Council for Marketing and Public Relations, District 6 competition, in 2002. This was in competition with other community colleges throughout California, Hawaii, Nevada, Arizona, and Utah. Places like Grossmont, San Diego, Miramar, Maricopa, Coast, Pima, and the list goes on. Additionally, this video is available on the GCC Assessment web site as streaming video, showcasing our assessment success at the college. We've been sharing our plan with any other institution that might be interested in our approach. Maui Community College, Hawaii Community on the Big Island, Leeward Community, Kauai Community, the College of Micronesia - Federated States of Micronesia, University of Guam, and now YOU. Ray's work with the on-line Community of Practice, sponsored by AAHE is expanding our interaction with other colleges by leaps and bounds. We also have our own assessment web site at www.guamcc.edu/assessment. I think Ray is going to take you there a little later this morning.

Our journey into serious assessment practices began as most quests do by asking a question. It went something like, “I’ve got to do assessment, I don’t know very much about assessment, who knows about assessment? Is there a conference on assessment?” So it was at an assessment conference in Hilo where I met Jeffrey Seybert, from Johnson County Community College, who is one of the foremost national authorities on assessment in higher education. His best advice was to point out to me that assessment is messy. Don’t expect it to be perfect, and understand that the process will always be evolving. So I went home and developed one of the messiest plans you can imagine. All the elements you see today were there, but I certainly didn’t have all the answers. Luckily, Dr. Ray Somera came along. Dr. Somera, now the Assistant Director for Assessment at GCC, is assigned primary responsibility for making the assessment process work at GCC. But that isn’t how we started. In the beginning he came to us as an Associate Dean, and I’m sure he was wondering why I was the one clapping during his initial employment interview when he said he had previous experience with assessment issues. I don’t usually do the end-zone victory dance, but I did that day. He was already signed up before he realized that the GCC assessment train had scooped him up and deposited him in the engineer’s seat. You might also be interested to know that Dr. Somera is now one of the leading experts on assessment at community colleges and works directly with the American Association of Higher Education (AAHE), WASC and ACCJC to train other community college educators. Several of you here today have already gone through some of his training. The GCC model is featured in Peggy Maki’s book titled, *Assessing for Learning*, to be released at the end of this month. (There’s a flyer for the book at the Shrine.)

There are three overarching reasons that compel us to put serious effort into our assessment activities, and these include the following:

- (1) to assess how well we did what we said we would do, particularly in terms of student learning outcomes;
- (2) to address issues of accountability to

legislators, the accreditation board, parents, students,
and other stakeholders of the college; and
(3) to utilize the results of our assessment efforts
to inform and guide our institutional planning.

That's the official line, anyway. Just between you and me, and I'm sure you won't spread this around, the real motivator was the notification letter from David Wolf and the Evaluation Report from the Commission after our last on-site visit by the Commission in 2000. In THE REPORT it was painfully, and repeatedly pointed out that we had ignored the evaluation recommendations of the Commission for the past two visits, - that's ten years, folks - and they were very annoyed. And because we had ignored assessment and evaluation, most of our planning efforts were deemed as being inadequate. While our accreditation was reaffirmed, these were very, very serious matters for an educational institution. Make no bones about it. The Commission wanted to see very significant progress on assessment and evaluation! As you might imagine, I was determined that we WOULD be able to report a well-developed institutional assessment and evaluation plan in very short order. Letters from the Commission are so motivational! And I'm here to report that we reached our goal. We're well into the fourth year of our assessment initiative, and a year or so ago we got a really nice letter from the Commission indicating that our mid-term report was accepted, along with an acknowledging statement that meant a great deal to me. It read, "The college is commended for the significant progress it has made in addressing the Commission's recommendations and for the excellent design of its program review/assessment process." I am so proud of my faculty and staff for accepting the challenge and making everything possible. Our assessment strategy is successful and highly regarded by the Commission. Your college is in dire straits at the moment. Let today's experience set you on your journey of reconciliation with the Commission.

Institutionally, we continually answer the question, "How well are we doing what we said

we would do?”, and we are working hard to provide evidence of using our own information to guide planning for the future. Currently we report our assessment findings in an annual document titled the Guam Community College Annual Institutional Assessment Report. Catchy little title, don’t you think?.

I’ll leave it up to Ray to talk a little about how we provide the data to support the institutional report.

Students, faculty and administrators have key roles to play in the initiative to address the challenge of making our institution as effective as it can be. Students and faculty, most of all, must be driven by a strong sense of mission in order to make assessment a success. Students are the lifeblood of our institution, and drawing them into the assessment effort logically makes them valuable players in program improvement and institutional change. Your student government, must take the lead in actively engaging the rest of your students to participate in the assessment of their own learning. Institutional change derives value from its rootedness in the classroom, the valued arena of every faculty member. A faculty-driven assessment initiative must begin in classroom-based processes, where learning outcomes are clearly-stated and measurable, and student learning outcomes remain at the core of all instructional content within our institution. This simply doesn’t work without enthusiastic faculty participation, and that’s why we’re all here today..

Drawing all the constituents together in the collective college endeavor called institutional assessment remains a continuing challenge for all of us. We at GCC are in the process of experimentation to find out what works best. Indeed, the culture of assessment on any campus can only be realized when we lend our collective voices to the effort.

Here’s what we’ve learned from our assessment efforts:

- * Board commitment, Administrative commitment, and Faculty commitment are equally important
- * A comprehensive assessment plan must be clearly stated
- * Assessment training must be continuous
- * Attending assessment training workshops and conferences are always useful for strengthening the initiative. After their attendance, most faculty report that they are more convinced that assessment matters
- * We need to exert greater effort to draw students into the college assessment initiative so that they become actively engaged in institutional assessment.
- * Sharing results with the public through events such as Vocational Assessment Day involving various departments is important
- * Believing that students justify our presence as an institution will make it easy for us to draw them in into our institutional assessment processes.
- * Faculty and administrator support toward assessment initiatives is crucial
- * Transparency remains the cornerstone of all assessment efforts.
- * we may need to rethink our current faculty and student evaluation forms.

Speaking of evaluations, I'd like to remind those of you responsible for evaluating others that references such as the following should be avoided:

"His men would follow him anywhere, but only out of morbid curiosity."

"Works well under constant supervision and when cornered like a rat in a trap."

"He would be out of his depth in a parking lot puddle."

"This young lady has dilusions of adequacy."

"She sets low personal standards and then consistently fails to achieve them."

"This employee is depriving a village somewhere of an idiot."

"A room temperature IQ."

"Got into the gene pool when the lifeguard wasn't watching."

"If he were any more stupid, he'd have to be watered twice a week."

And my personal favorite, "Some drink from the fountain of knowledge;
he only
gargled."

While you may be tempted to exercise your creative writing skills, keep in mind that evaluation should be a constructive event; a conversation about goals and strategies to help people succeed; not an opportunity to vent and then walk away from the collision.

But I digress in my feeble attempt at being informative AND entertaining. Back to my list of what we've learned from our assessment efforts.

- * Assessment software is important to the enterprise. We've decided to use the NuVente product called TracDat, which is a web-based program but with a local server to store your own data. It's a very powerful database, with some impressive reporting capabilities.
- * It is important that all assessment processes feed into institutional planning. It's the key factor in the WASC accrediting standards. It's that Assessment, Evaluation, Planning cycle that I spoke of earlier. They want to see this process in motion. This is the fundamental reason why they stress over and over the need for dialog.
- * answer the questions, "Did you do what you said you would?" "How do you know?" And "How will this information influence what you do in the future?"
- * Be willing to compromise - remember assessment is messy. Our experience is that you won't get very useful information at first, but concentrate on getting the process going. Trust me, the information you generate will get better and better.
- * Share what you know with as many people as you can.
 - * And finally, I advise you to jump in with both feet - don't be timid, but organize the effort

Thank you for listening today. It is my hope that you stopped listening and I stopped talking at approximately the same moment.

References

Astin, Alexander W. (2001) *Institutional Transformation: Context and Process*. Higher Education Research Institute, UCLA,

James O. Nichols and Karen W. Nichols. (2000) *The Department Head's Guide to Assessment Implementation in Administrative and Educational Support Units*, New York, NY: Agathon Press

James O. Nichols and Karen W. Nichols. (2000) *The Departmental Guide and Record Book for Student Outcomes Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness*, New York, NY: Agathon Press

James O. Nichols and Karen W. Nichols. (2001) *General Education Assessment for Improvement of Student Academic Achievement: Guidance for Academic Departments and Committees*, New York, NY: Agathon Press

Piland, Bill. (2001) *Student Learning Outcomes: Implications for Accreditation*. Excerpts from a presentation to Commissioners at an ACCJC Commission Retreat.