Chapter Five Appendix

Enclosure 5.01
Summary of USNA Academic Assessment from 1999 – 2005

SUMMARY OF USNA ACADEMIC ASSESSMENT FROM 1999 – 2005

Prior to 2005 assessment at USNA was undertaken on an ad hoc basis. Contiguous with the 2005 decennial Middle States accreditation self-study and Team Visit both Academic and Institutional Effectiveness Assessment were institutionalized. The following discussion focuses on Academic Assessment at the Naval Academy from 1999 – 2005. The establishment of the Institutional Effective is discussed in the response MSCHE RECOMMENDATION for Standard 7: Institutional Assessment in Chapter Two.

Academic assessment at the Naval Academy, which was launched in 1999 by Dean William Miller within the context of the USNA Strategic Plan, has three major features. The first is the investigation of institution-wide learning outcomes. The second is the assessment of academic majors, minors, and/or tracks including interdisciplinary programs. And, the third is the evaluation of the Core Curriculum. The Naval Academy started by looking at institution-wide goals that are supported by the core and other academic programs. The development of assessment plans by academic departments quickly followed.

Institutional effectiveness assessment was not at this time an institution-wide effort although an oversight committee Management and Implementation Team (MIT) was established to monitor the implementation of the 1999 strategic plan.

During the summer and fall of 1999, a small number of faculty volunteers attended different academic assessment events including the American Association for Higher Education Assessment Conference. Drawing on the faculty expertise developed through these experiences, in August 1999, Dean William asked for volunteers to work on academic assessment and, as a result, created the Assessment Task Force (ATF). The ATF was charged formally by the Dean to look at the academic capabilities and attributes of graduates embedded in the Strategic Plan and to initiate a process to develop a campus-wide academic assessment process.

During the 1999-2000 academic year the ATF developed a framework to assess effective communication, critical thinking, and geopolitical understanding, based on the Rose-Hulman model. Subsequently, a subcommittee of the ATF developed rubrics to assess effective communication as demonstrated through written work and oral presentations. Input on the rubrics was solicited from all academic departments. During the 2000-2001 academic year, the Assessment Task Force developed a specific assessment plan for critical thinking that included creating an assessment rubric and selecting for further review the Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal. This instrument was administered on a pilot test basis several times from 2003 to 2007.

Starting in 2001, departments in the three academic divisions, namely, mathematics and science, humanities and social sciences, and engineering and weapons were tasked by the Dean to establish assessment programs. Over the next two years, departments created assessment plans for each major, minor, track and interdisciplinary program. Annual reports were developed each spring and assessment events provided an opportunity to share accomplishments and lessons learned. In addition, the Office of Academic Assessment was created and a director was brought onboard in August 2002.

The effective communication rubrics were piloted and reviewed during the spring semester 2001, which led to their further development. In the spring of 2002, on-line versions of the effective communication rubrics were used to evaluate a writing assignment from a sample of fourth-class midshipmen (freshmen) in required English courses and a sample of first-class midshipmen (seniors) in departmental capstone research courses. The ATF chose to use existing assignments as the basis for assessment, so as to not add to the faculty workload. The effective communication rubrics were used again with a sample of fourth-class and first-class midshipmen in spring 2003. A geopolitical understanding assessment instrument was developed locally in 2004 and was pilot tested with a sample of Plebes and First Class students in 2005 and 2008.

In 2004, the Senate amended its Bylaws to include the standing Faculty Senate Assessment Committee. The next year Dean Miller promulgated an AcDean Instruction (5420.36) on Reporting of Annual Assessment Progress, **Enclosure 5.02**.

From the first five years of experience with academic assessment the ATF learned the following lessons: (1) start the process with interested faculty with some knowledge of assessment to maintain forward momentum; (2) provide opportunities for faculty to learn about assessment through national conferences and workshops, as well as local workshops to reduce the anxiety of creating departmental plans and to emphasize the importance of “doing” assessment; (3) acknowledge and emphasize that the assessment process is not static, but is flexible and ever evolving; (4) have a person dedicated to supporting the assessment process; (5) make assessment oversight a part of the responsibility of a faculty senate-like organization so that faculty feel ownership; and (6) share and celebrate successes and lessons learned so as to create an assessment culture.