The purpose of student learning outcome assessment is to provide timely and useful information regarding student achievement as it relates to the academic goals of the institution. The major goal of student learning outcome assessment at Colby Community College (CCC) is the improvement of the college students’ experience. Assessment at CCC refers to the process of understanding the outcomes of student learning, as well as clear and focused goals that enhance student and program performance.

The current assessment environment at CCC follows the guiding principles for assessment as reflected by the American Association for Higher Education (AAHE):

1. The assessment of student learning begins with educational values: Assessment is to be used as a vehicle for educational improvement. The college mission must be understood by students, faculty, staff and the community.

2. Assessment is effective when it reflects an understanding of learning as multidimensional, integrated, and revealed in performance over time: Learning Assessment should include diversity in methodology, including those that define objective evidence of student performance. Over time, outcomes will reveal change, growth, and continuous improvement in student learning. Assessment is embedded into the ongoing work of educating students.

3. Assessment works best when the programs it seeks to improve have clearly stated purposes: Assessment is goal oriented and compares educational performance with educational purposes and expectations.

4. Assessment requires attention to outcomes but also and equally to the experiences that lead up to those outcomes: Effective assessment strategies pay attention to process. Educational processes are essential to the attainment of an outcome.

5. Assessment works best when it is ongoing: Assessment must be continually nurtured, evaluated, and refined in order to ensure success.

6. Assessment fosters greater improvement when the educational community is involved: Student learning is a campus-wide responsibility. Successful assessment is dependent on the involvement of many individuals with each person contributing his or her knowledge, expertise and perspectives. Assessment works best when it is conceptualized as a group effort.

7. Assessment makes a difference when it begins with issues of use and illuminates questions that people really care about: Assessment recognizes the value of information
in the process of improvement. Successful assessment programs know how to use data. Assessment makes a difference when meaningful data are collected and applied a basis for decision making. Only then can data guide continuous improvement.

8. Assessment is most likely to lead to improvement when it is a part of a larger set of conditions that promote change: Assessment alone changes very little. Successful assessment is directed toward improvements. Those improvements may occur in teaching, student learning, academic support, or institutional effectiveness. Assessment information must be applied systemically towards improvements if it is to have a lasting impact on the institution.

9. Through assessment, educators meet responsibilities to students and the public: Effective assessment programs measure outcomes and then inform their stakeholders how programs and services positively impact students, the community, and society. Assessment is an important component in demonstrating institutional accountability.

Many tasks were successfully completed in 2011-2012. These included:

1. The Colby Community College Strategic Plan for 2012-2017, Goal #3 will use assessment data for the enhancement of existing programs.

2. Program Assessment Matrices were written.

3. The General Education Assessment Outcome Matrix was completed.

4. Assessment resource needs were extrapolated from courses in the Assessment System to substantiate budgetary requests for improving student learning.

5. Assessment training was conducted for new full-time and adjunct faculty.

6. All adjunct Outreach faculty at the August 2012 In-service were provided information on assessment, the need for assessing outreach courses, and assigned an on-campus mentor to give support and guidance for assessment activity.

Summary:

The purpose of student outcome assessment is to provide useful and timely information about student achievement as it relates to the college’s institutional goals and mission. CCC aspires to excel in teaching and learning. Information obtained through assessment activities will be used to determine the progress being made towards achieving our goals and to identify areas of improvement. Colby Community College (CCC) Assessment Committee is currently writing a
new five-year plan for on-campus and Outreach course assessment activity. It will set the
direction for assessment in general education and major programs. The Assessment Committee
will provide the oversight to all faculty, full-time and adjuncts, to ensure a consistent adherence
to the assessment guidelines. The new plans, once approved and adopted, will cover student
learning outcome assessment for 2012-2017. These plans will be based on the foundation of past
work. Once the new five-year plan is reviewed and accepted, the College can be confident in the
continuing path to improvement.

A great deal of progress was accomplished over the course of this year. Efforts are continuous
and ongoing to ensure all faculty and staff continue to embrace the role of assessment on our
campus. Colby Community College’s Strategic Plan with the incorporation of assessment
activities was a watershed event demonstrating the full commitment of all stakeholders in this
effort.