Annual Outcomes Assessment Update - 2015

As one component of the Iowa Board of Regents current Strategic Plan, Iowa’s public universities have been directed to develop, in collaboration with faculty, student outcomes assessment plans for each academic program and establish targets for collecting and using assessment results.

Many departments at UI have been actively implementing student outcomes assessment for a number of years, and in recent years the university has made significant progress in strengthening outcomes assessment across all undergraduate degree programs. This report provides a summary of department involvement with outcomes assessment.

Each department establishes learning outcomes for its undergraduate programs, and each determines how to best organize its curriculum to support student learning. Our system for outcomes assessment similarly rests on faculty expertise and department leadership.

Each department at UI identifies what constitutes satisfactory achievement of its learning outcomes, and each determines appropriate strategies both for assessing student learning and for using assessment findings to further develop its programs. Central administration provides support, coordination, and resources to assist departments in carrying out assessment efforts.

Benchmark Activities for Outcomes Assessment at UI

In 2010, UI identified targets for implementing outcomes assessment on campus. Targets for subsequent years were met through sustained efforts to maintain an annual cycle of department assessment updates and identification of department assessment priorities for the following year. Table 1 presents a summary of these benchmarks for outcomes assessment at UI. Annual progress reports with more detailed summaries of each year’s assessment activities are available online at http://www.uiowa.edu/assessment/learning-outcomes-reports

After meeting established benchmarks, UI has maintained this annual cycle and continued to expand engagement with outcomes assessment in academic departments (Figure 1).
Departmental Implementation of Assessment

While methods used for outcomes assessment vary widely, all departments are expected to:

- Develop an assessment plan identifying learning outcomes and assessment strategies in use
- Assign an individual to coordinate assessment of one or more learning outcomes annually
- Conduct a collective review of assessment findings by faculty on a regular basis
- On the basis of their review, identify next steps for program improvement or further development

Figure 1 presents department levels of engagement in outcomes assessment. Since 2010, the percentage of departments regularly reviewing and acting on assessment data has steadily increased. At that time, roughly one-third of departments reported no outcomes assessment efforts, or nothing more than an assessment plan on paper. By 2015, all departments were actively carrying out program-level learning outcomes assessment plans, and in most cases, reviewing and acting on the data they had collected.

As shown in Figure 1, 66.7% of UI departments are reporting on ways that they use findings from the program-level learning outcomes assessment to improve or further develop their programs. **Ongoing efforts** in these departments include regularly scheduled review of assessment findings, discussion of program implications, and ongoing follow-up with actions taken based on their review. **Next steps** for these departments are to sustain their current level of assessment and continue acting on lessons learned from the assessment data they collect.

An additional 20.3% of departments report that faculty work together to review assessment findings on a regular basis. Steps taken include reviewing coursework, alumni experiences, and employer perceptions of program graduates. **Ongoing efforts** in these departments focus on testing their outcomes assessment strategies to identify the quality of the data they are collecting and discussing implications of findings. **Next steps** for these departments include integrating outcomes assessment with other quality improvement efforts, and finding ways to efficiently manage assessment processes in the department.

The remaining 13% of departments have taken the step of appointing an individual to coordinate their program-level learning outcomes assessment efforts. **Current efforts** in these departments include further developing and pilot-testing assessment strategies. **Next steps** for these departments include finalizing and more fully implementing assessment plans, and bringing assessment findings to the full department for review and follow-up action.

**Figure 1: Department Levels of Involvement in Outcomes Assessment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Achieved Benchmark Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June 2011</td>
<td>o Collect department assessment plans and confirm that plans reflect current practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Identify department priorities and specific plans for assessment during 2011/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2012</td>
<td>o Collect department reports on lessons learned from assessment during 2011/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Identify department priorities and specific plans for assessment during 2012/13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2013</td>
<td>o Continue annual cycle of department updates on assessment priorities and activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Prepare a profile of university-wide assessment activities and outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2014</td>
<td>o Continue annual cycle of department updates on assessment priorities and activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Update and expand the profile of university-wide assessment activities and outcomes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Achieved Benchmark Activities for Implementation of Outcomes Assessment at UI

http://www.uiowa.edu/assessment
Examples of Ways UI Departments are Conducting Assessment

Faculty regularly evaluate student work and give students feedback on their learning in a course. For Outcomes Assessment, faculty take the additional step of reviewing how effectively the department is supporting overall student learning in the major.

UI departments provide annual updates on ways they use assessment findings in the department. In each department, outcomes assessment is designed to reflect the nature of the discipline, the structure of the program, and the questions that faculty members have about student learning and success. Updates are online at http://www.uiowa.edu/assessment/learning-outcomes-reports

Coordination With Other Departmental Assessment

Each department’s educational programs are reviewed as part of the department’s regularly scheduled Academic Program Review, and student learning and success are both central components of institutional accreditation. Also, nearly 40% of undergraduate programs undergo periodic disciplinary accreditation.

Academic Program and Accreditation-related reviews occur every 5-10 years, depending on the department, and typically include an extensive departmental self-study and a visit by a team of external reviewers. The annual cycle of learning outcomes assessment contributes to these longer-term processes by helping departments maintain learning outcomes assessment on a year-to-year basis and by making it possible to act on current information that becomes available between Academic Program Reviews and Accreditation-related assessments.

Coordination With Other Institutional Assessment

UI regularly implements MAP-Works (Making Achievement Possible), a survey of all incoming first-year students during the first month of school. MAP-Works provides valuable information about students’ early experiences at UI, and helps get them on course for success early in their university career. The MAP-Works team shares data with academic and student service departments and works with them to reach out to students who are struggling during their initial adjustment to the university.

During Spring 2013 and 2014, all undergraduates were invited to take the Student Experiences in the Research University (SERU) survey. The survey gathers information about student engagement in activities that have been influence student learning and success, both inside and outside the classroom. Reports of SERU data have been given to each department, including mean responses for all students in their major, all students in the same major at other SERU institutions, and all UI undergraduates. A series of SERU Briefs summarizing selected campus-wide responses is available online at http://www.uiowa.edu/assessment/seru

All UI Graduating Seniors are invited to take the UI Senior Exit Survey at the time they file to graduate. This brief survey asks students about their perceptions of their undergraduate experience, what most helped or hindered their success at UI, and their participation in opportunities that extend learning beyond the classroom. The Senior Survey identifies five common academic experiences at UI that give students opportunities to take their learning beyond the boundaries of individual classes. Reports of data collected through the UI Senior Exit Survey are available online at http://www.uiowa.edu/assessment/ui-senior-exit-survey

The Pomerantz Career Center conducts the annual First Destination Survey of UI undergraduate alumni six to seven months after graduation. Results are reported for each undergraduate college, and are available on request to each department: http://www.uiowa.edu/assessment/graduate-career-surveys

http://www.uiowa.edu/assessment