

Academic Effectiveness

Accomplishments, Shortfalls, and Goals Report for 2019-2020

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Associate Provost of Academic Effectiveness Responsibilities

1. Oversee and review program assessment activities
2. Facilitate alignment of course goals, program outcomes, undergraduate learning outcomes, graduate learning outcomes, and general education outcomes
3. Facilitate professional learning communities
4. Coordinate program review
5. Coordinate our faculty professional development opportunities, including new faculty orientation
6. Oversee use of TK20/Watermark for assessment planning and reporting

Accomplishments

Closed gaps in our assessment reporting

Prior to 2019-20, WOU had been assessing our Undergraduate Learning Outcomes (ULOs) on a three-year cycle using Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) dedicated to specific ULOs (e.g., a Quantitative Literacy PLC, a Written Communication PLC, etc.). When I assumed the role as Associate Provost in July, 2019, however, we had already planned to have a General Education PLC to focus on the General Education Learning Outcomes (GELOs) and had not made plans for any ULO PLCs.

Coincidentally, in August, 2019, NWCCU released their new accreditation standards which required that “the institution...assesses, across all associate and bachelor level programs or within a General Education curriculum, institutional learning outcomes...” Because the General Education Committee had already thoughtfully aligned the GELOs with the ULOs, we were in a good position to assess our ULOs within the General Education Curriculum, but the students who were in programs with alternative general education curricula—Honors students, Applied Baccalaureate students, and Bachelor of Music students—would not be captured in our assessment process.

To remedy our assessment gaps, faculty modified the Applied Baccalaureate Core Curriculum and the Bachelor of Music Core Curriculum so that they both align with our General Education curriculum. We will now be able to assess students in the General Education Program, Applied Baccalaureate programs, and the Bachelor of Music program using the process that Dr. Erin Baumgartner and General Education PLC already established.

The Honors Committee, in addition to revising the Honors curriculum, has established Program Learning Outcomes that they will begin assessing in 2019-20.

I had very little to do with the Applied Baccalaureate Core revisions, the Music Core revisions, and the establishment of an assessment plan for the Honors Program, other than checking with the relevant faculty to offer assistance if needed.

We also have two cross-disciplinary degrees—Interdisciplinary Studies and Liberal Studies—which are not housed in a specific academic department and therefore had been missed when we created our institutional program assessment infrastructure. I worked with faculty involved in both of these programs to ensure that they begin assessing their programs in the 2019-20 academic year.

Created a new General Education Assessment process

The General Education PLC, chaired by Dr. Erin Baumgartner, planned to assess the Foundational Skills and Breadth of Learning GELO and the Quantitative Literacy ULO using the First Year Seminar courses. Because of interruptions caused by COVID-19, the work that was planned to address Quantitative Literacy was tabled and the PLC focused on Foundational Skills and Breadth of Learning.

The initial work performed by the PLC was to revise the Foundational Skills rubric. The original rubric was written from a Deficit Model perspective which asked faculty to determine whether student work demonstrated the absence of certain skills. The revised rubric was written using a Growth Model perspective, which requires faculty to identify the presence of evidence rather than the absence of evidence.

Faculty who taught First Year Seminars submitted work samples to the General Education PLC so the PLC could assess student performance. The Foundation Skills Rubric had four categories (Knowledge of Content, Analysis, Utilization of Evidence, and Application of Conventions and Mechanics) each with four levels of student performance (Benchmark-1, Milestone-2, Milestone-3, and Capstone-4). The General Education PLC found that all work samples offered students the opportunity to demonstrate Utilization of Evidence, and that over 90% of work samples offered students the opportunity to demonstrate Knowledge of Content, Analysis, and Application of Conventions and Mechanics. For all features, over 60% of student work demonstrated a Milestone-2 level of performance.

Created mechanism to quantify and track assessment practices at WOU

In an effort to identify which aspects of Program Assessment need improvement, I used a rubric to evaluate all submitted assessment reports. The same rubric will be used in the next several years in order to determine if we have made improvements as a university.

A general strength across campus was the identification of appropriate data sources and the collection of data. Many of our programs are using capstone experiences that are common to all students in their program. Additionally, many programs are either sampling all students or sampling is random. A majority of programs (60%) also had scoring methods that allowed Programs to clearly distinguish different levels of performance and to analyze components of student work.

Provided feedback on Annual Assessment Reports

A common complaint from faculty is that they feel like they put time and energy into annual reports which then are filed away and never read. In 2019-20, I provided feedback to every program on their Annual Program Assessment Reports.

Facilitated Program Review Process

For most of the 2019-20 academic year, my role in the Program Review process was limited. The only programs that were in the review process were in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. Dean Kathy Cassity largely managed the process on her own.

In the Spring term I hosted five Zoom sessions on Program Review for any interested faculty, and invited a “Program Review alumnus” to each session to provide insight. Dr. Lars Soderlund, Dr. Xenon Zygmunt, and Dr. John Leadley each attended multiple sessions and were a valuable resource for faculty. The Program Review sessions were well attended: 25-30 faculty, in total, attended at least one session.

In the Summer 2020, I spent a significant amount of time performing data analysis for Programs that begin their review process in the Fall 2020 term. Max Chartier was particularly helpful in providing the necessary raw data. As of Sept. 7, 2020, I was able to meet 30 of the 36 data requests.

Completion of revision of Graduate Learning Outcomes

When the WOU graduate program faculty initially attempted to assess our original Graduate Learning Outcomes (GLOs), they found that the GLOs were poorly aligned with the goals of many individual graduate programs. The Graduate Studies PLC, chaired by Dr. Melanie Landon-Hayes, began the process of revising our GLOs in 2018-19. In 2019-20 the new GLOs—Core Content Knowledge, Applied Skills, and Disposition and Values—were approved by the Faculty Senate. In 2019-20, the Graduate Studies PLC assessed the GLO Core Content Knowledge.

New Faculty Orientation

Assisted by Beverly West, I organized a day-long New Faculty Orientation event for 34 new faculty. In 2019, in addition to the new tenure-track faculty, we invited new non-tenure-track faculty who were above 0.5 FTE. Second-year faculty were also invited to hear Provost Rob Winningham discuss the tenure and promotion process.

At the end of orientation, we asked faculty to complete a survey about the orientation. On a 5-point likert scale, all components of the orientation were given ratings between 4.1-4.9.

2020 Academic Excellence Showcase

Due to COVID-19, our annual Academic Excellence Showcase was moved on-line and hosted on Digital Commons. We had 80 completed AES submissions of student work. There were over 1,000 downloads of AES submissions from May 28 and June 10. About 75% of AES submissions will stay in Digital Commons permanently, resulting in three times as many AES presentations than were submitted to Digital Commons in 2019. While we obviously lost the opportunity to expose the campus community to our students' work, the virtual AES was more visible to the global community. We should continue to feature a virtual component, or at the very least support the use of Digital Commons for AES presentations, even if we return to an in-person event in 2021.

Dr. Greg Zobel (PURE Director), Dr. Sue Kunda, Dr. Stewart Baker, and Dr. Xiaopeng Gong, were primarily responsible for successfully creating our virtual AES.

Publication of *PURE Insights*

The 8th volume of *PURE Insights* was published in December, 2019. The journal had a dozen submissions from students, and included two articles published in Spanish. *PURE Insights* articles have been downloaded over 24,000 times in the past year. The successful publication of *PURE Insights* was overseen by Dr. Paula Baldwin, as Managing Editor.

Finalized the new Honors curriculum

The Honors Committee finalized a complete overhaul of the Honors curriculum, a process which began during the 2018-19 academic year. This process required new courses, a new course approval process, as well as a new scheduling process. The Honors Director, Dr. Gavin Keulks, worked with each current Honors student individually to determine which curriculum they would complete, and how they would transition between the old and new curricula if necessary.

Shortfalls

Create opportunities for campus dialog about assessment within and across programs

According to faculty, many programs continue to struggle to find time to thoughtfully engage with assessment throughout the academic year. It is my opinion that WOU needs to give faculty dedicated time to work within programs on their assessment planning and reporting, and to work across programs to compare and contrast their achievements. In the past year, I proposed an amended university calendar that would create several days for cultural competency training, assessment work, and professional development. The plan would also have balanced out the number of teaching days across the Fall, Winter, and Spring terms. The plan was well-received by WOU administration, but was not approved by Faculty Senate.

Identify areas of improvement in Program Review Process

WOU began instituting a 7-year Program Review process in 2016-17. We slowly increased the number of programs performing their review in each year, with 2 programs in 2017-18, 3 programs in 2018-19, and 4 programs in 2019-20. The programs that completed the process have all spoken highly of the Program Review process. However, the process has generally taken longer than two years for most programs—for example, none of the programs that started the process in 2018-19 have finished their Program Review. Some of the delay can be attributed to COVID-19, but even without the pandemic, those programs would have taken at least two years to complete their Program Review.

I had planned to meet with the Deans of our academic colleges in Spring 2020 to discuss how we can improve the process and what we need to do to help programs stay on track. However, that conversation was postponed because of COVID-19 interruptions.

Complete Course Goals Database

In the Fall of 2019, 39% of courses in our database were missing Course Goals. As of Sept. 8, 2020, 36% of courses in our database were missing Course Goals. One issue appears to be that the Course Goals database is not updated when courses are dropped from our catalog. However, in the Spring 2020 term, we offered 136 courses that did not have Course Goals in our database. Despite a concerted effort on my part to update the database for those courses, faculty only updated 28 the Course Goals for those 136 courses.

Assessment Reporting

Continuing a trend from previous years, many programs do not submit their Annual Program Assessment Reports on time. The annual deadline is October 31. In 2019, 54 programs were expected to submit an Annual Assessment Report for 2018-19. Of the undergraduate programs, 65% completed their reports by Dec. 31, 2019. Graduate programs had a lower reporting rate than Bachelors programs, with only 40% of Masters and Certificate programs reporting by Dec. 31, 2019.

Strengthen alignment to Undergraduate Learning Outcomes

One of the assessment issues noted by Dr. Baumgartner when she was Associate Provost for Academic Effectiveness is that many degree programs do not connect their Program Assessment process to the Undergraduate Learning Outcomes. I agree with her assessment, and noticed a continuation of this issue in the 2018-19 Program Assessment Reports, but did not address the issue explicitly with programs in 2019-2020. I also do not plan to make it a priority in 2020-21, but include it in this report so it does not get forgotten as a long-term issue we should address with our assessment process.

Goals for 2020-21

100% completion of Program Assessment Reports

There is no reason that we cannot have all programs complete a Program Assessment Report for 2019-20. In order to achieve this goal, I plan to increase the frequency of check-ins with programs that are late submitting their reports. After Nov. 30, 2020, I will request Division Chairs to follow-up with programs that haven't submitted a report. After Dec. 31, 2020, I will request Deans to follow-up with programs.

University-wide improvement on quality of assessment

In 2019-20, I began using a rubric to assess the quality of our assessment processes across campus. To help programs improve their processes, I sent all programs feedback on their 2018-19 reports. I also gave a report to Faculty Senate about our status. I plan to feature the rubric during my opening remarks on our university Assessment Day on Friday, Sept. 18, followed by an assessment workshop.

Complete our Course Goals database and check syllabus reporting of Course Goals

One of the NWCCU accreditation standards is that students are provided with the Course Goals for their classes. We achieve this by requiring faculty to include their Course Goals on their syllabuses. This year I plan to email Division APAs to spot-check course syllabuses. I also hope to have faculty complete our database of Course Goals for all courses offered in the 2019-20 academic year. After a disappointing response from faculty last year, I plan to ask Deans to help me encourage faculty to submit the Course Goals for classes that don't have goals in our database.

Update alignment of Graduate Course Goals to the new Graduate Learning Outcomes

New Graduate Learning Outcomes (GLOs) were approved by the Faculty Senate in 2018-19. We need to begin updating our Course Goals database to align graduate courses to the new GLOs.

Honors, PURE, *PURE Insights*, and General Education

I plan to meet with the faculty leaders of Honors, PURE, *PURE Insights*, and General Education during Fall Kickoff to establish goals for the 2019-20 academic year.

Establish a single list of peer institutions for comparisons

The NWCCU accreditation standards state that we need to provide comparisons to peer institutions. NWCCU expects us to have one set of peer institutions, rather than selecting different peers for different comparisons. Currently, WOU has at least three different comparison groups. A goal for 2019-20 is to establish a single list that we use for all comparisons.