Annual Academic Program Assessment by Major

Program assessment is a process that enables faculty to answer the following key questions:

- What are we trying to accomplish and why?

- How well are we doing what we intend to do?

- Do we use the information we collect to improve, and to celebrate our successes?

- How do we know that improvements we initiate are working?

Asking and answering these questions allows us to make strategic decisions and to use our valuable resources to their best advantage. This Annual Program Assessment Summaries by Major will set the stage for the more detailed periodic program self-study that occurs every seven years, and will help enhance our academic offerings, ensuring that they are linked to the mission and vision of the University.

1. **Program Mission Statement**

   A mission statement is a concise statement of the general values and principles, which guide the curriculum. It sets the tone and a philosophical position from which follow a program's goals and objectives. The Program Mission Statement should define the broad purposes the program is aiming to achieve, describe the community the program is designed to serve, and state the values and guiding principles, which define its standards.

2. **Identify Well Articulated Student Learning Outcomes**

   Student learning outcomes articulate what a student should know or can do after completing their program. The assessment of student learning outcomes provides information that puts student learning at the forefront of academic planning processes. Outcomes should be based on what is important and where appropriate, should incorporate professional organization expectations. Consider also how the program learning goals relate to the University's general student learning goals (*Communications, Critical and Integrative Thinking, Quantitative Reasoning, Information Literacy, Global Citizenship, and Artistic Understanding and Expression*).

   Specific **student learning outcomes** should describe what students should be able to demonstrate or produce at given points in, or at the completion of, their studies. These may lend themselves to either quantitative or qualitative assessments. Use benchmarks, when available, and establish targets to be achieved. (For example, 85% of graduating students should pass a licensing exam, 75% of students should successfully conduct and present a research experiment, 20% of students should perform with distinction on a particular analytic or artistic assignment, student candidates should score at least a three in six areas of a student teaching observation system, be at or above the national average on some indicator, etc.).

3. **Be realistic; do not indicate more than one or two learning goals to assess in any one year, unless there is a reason to do more (e.g., significant change in curriculum, or upcoming self-study).**

   Some questions to ask in establishing student learning outcomes:

   - o **What do we expect students to know at different points or by the end of the program?** (e.g., specific facts, concepts, principles, theories, how to cite sources, the scientific method, different approaches to portrait artistry, distinctive values of different schools of thought, the various components of patient care, best practices in a field, etc.).

   - o **What should students be able to do at different points or by the end of the program?** (e.g., solve problems, read and speak in a foreign language, apply knowledge to different situations, analyze information, research a problem, employ particular technology, identify, appraise and use pertinent information, identify relationships and organizing principles, evaluate the strengths of different arguments, create a work of art, direct a performance, pass licensure examinations, demonstrate the capacity to consider a range of ideas, etc.).

   Please note that student learning outcomes are not expected to necessarily change from year to year. Only when Next Steps suggest modification, or additional goals are identified, should outcomes change.

4. **Use Assessment Measures that Relate to the Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)**

   Where possible, assessments should be direct measures of SLOs. Student learning assessment, for example, might be based on proficiency examinations, demonstrated work, career placement, oral examination or presentation, etc. In some instances, it may be worthwhile to develop rubrics for scoring student work in relation to mastery of learning goals. Some measures might be useful in assessing multiple learning goals. Indicate how the assessment tool is incorporated into the program—for example, is it part of a lab assignment, a capstone paper, an oral presentation, a standardized test for the discipline, a licensing or qualifying examination, an exhibit, or a performance.

   Sometimes, indirect measures, such as self-reported survey findings, are useful in evaluating student learning. Other goals may be measured by actual trend analyses or descriptions of new activities. Multiple assessment measures may be necessary to obtain a balanced picture of progress.

   - o A curriculum map of required courses and the associated learning goals covered in each would provide a useful guide to identifying gaps in the distribution and assessment of student learning outcomes throughout the curriculum.

   - o Trends in the number of majors, degrees awarded, and student demographics would provide information on the breadth and depth of the program.

5. **Describe Important Findings from the Assessment Measures/Results**

Identify key areas of success, as well as areas in need of improvement. Provide actual data that support accomplishments and gains or suggest need for improvement. Examples of this might be: the percentage of students who meet or exceed expectations on a key measure, pass rates on licensing examinations, overall performance on capstone assignments, external review of new concentrations,

6. **Next Steps**

Develop new targets for improvements and indicate how these will be accomplished (e.g., realigning coursework, adding new material, changing assignments, changing mode of instructional delivery, changes in admission requirements, increased professional activities, plans for new faculty positions justified by increased enrollment).

   o Have changes made in the program improved student learning and success?

   o Where possible, specify desired outcomes (e.g., 85% of students will pass a licensure examination, or meet or surpass an established standard).

   o Include a timeline for accomplishing improvements.

   o What will we do with the information we collect?

7. **Budgetary Considerations**

Given the assessment evidence provided above, identify possible future budgetary considerations.

8. **Other**

Other relevant documentation: e.g., annual department report, assessment rubrics, etc.