

MEMORANDUM

Date: December 22, 2014

To: Daniel J. Howard, Executive Vice President & Provost

cc: Roberta Derlin, Associate Provost for Accreditation, Assessment & Academic Planning

From: Shelly Stovall, Director of Assessment

RE: Fall 2014 Institutional Report on Academic Program Assessment

All departments at NMSU are required to participate in and report annually on undergraduate and graduate outcomes assessment of student learning. In September each year, a call for reports is issued to Academic Deans, Associate Deans & Department Heads from the Executive Vice President & Provost. Departmental reports of graduate and undergraduate outcomes assessment are collected by each college and reviewed by the Deans or their designees. The collected reports are then forwarded, along with a college summary, to the Director of Assessment on or before October 15.

NMSU's six academic colleges and the library house 53 departments. Of the 53 departments, 50 offer undergraduate degrees, and 41 offer graduate degrees. The Library does not offer a degree program. In Fall 2014 the Office of Assessment received college summary reports from each academic college, with Departmental *Academic Program Assessment (APA) of Student Learning Fall 2014 Reports* attached. Because the Library submitted their annual report for 2013-14 assessment of student learning in Spring 2014, they are not included in this report. Because the Library report was not included in this cycle, a total 90 departmental reports were expected; 94 were received. NMSU recently set a goal for 100% of academic departments to report annually on outcomes assessment of student learning (for both graduate and undergraduate programs). The 94 reports received represent 83 reporting units (1 per department for graduate and undergraduate programs as appropriate; several departments submitted more than 1 report). This results in reporting by 92% of departments across the NMSU-Las Cruces campus. This is an increase from 74% reporting in Fall 2013. Table 1 compares reporting from 2013 to 2014, by college. Table 2 indicates the reports received by college and department, Fall 2014.

Table 1: Reporting by college, Fall 2014 and Fall 2013

College	Fall 2014			Fall 2013		
	Reports Expected	Reports Received	% Reporting	Reports Expected	Reports Received	% Reporting
ACES	15	11	73%	15	6	40%
A&S	41	41	100%	40	32	80%
BUS	9	9	100%	9	9	100%
EDUC	8	7	88%	8	7	88%
ENG	11	9	82%	12	6	50%
HSS	6	6	100%	6	6	100%
TOTAL	90	83	92%	91	67	74%

Table 2: Undergraduate and graduate reports received Fall 2014, by department

College	Department	Reports Received	
		UG	GR
ACES	Ag Econ & Ag Bus	1	-
	Animal & Range Sci	2	1
	Ag Exten & Educ	1	-
	Env Plant Path & Weed Sci	1	1
	Family & Cons Sci	1	-
	Fish Wildlife & Cons Ecol	1	-
	Hotel Rest & Tour Mgmt	1	NA
	Plant & Env Sci	1	1
A&S	ANTH	1	1
	ART	1	1
	ASTR	NA	1
	BIOL	1	1
	CH&BIOCH	1	1
	COMM	1	1
	CS	1	1
	CMI	1	NA
	CJ	1	1
	ENGL	1	1
	L & L	1	NA
	GEOG	1	1
	GEOL	1	1
	GOVT	1	2
	HIST	1	1
	Intrdsc Stud	1	NA
	JOURN-MASS COMM	1	NA
	MATH	1	1
	MUS	1	1
	PHIL	1	NA
	PHYS	1	1
	PSYC	1	1
	SOC	1	1
	THTR	1	NA
BUS	ACCT-INFO SYST	2	1
	FIN	1	NA
	MGMT	1	1
	MKTG	1	1
	EASIB	2	3
EDUC	C&I	1	1
	HPDR	1	NA
	SPED & CD	1	2
	CEP	0	3
	ELA	NA	1
ENG	CHEM	1	1
	CIVIL	1	-
	ELEC & COMP	1	-
	ETSE	3	NA

	INDUST	1	1
	MECH & AERO	1	1
HSS	Pub Hlth Sci	1	1
	Sch of Nurs	1	1
	Schof SW	1	1
LIB	Library	1	NA

All 94 reports were reviewed by the Director of Assessment (DoA). The DoA then met with each Dean or Dean's designee (Associate Dean) to review college reports and feedback. Following the meetings, the DoA wrote a summary report to the Provost regarding the college submission, and included departmental feedback in the form of a rubric. Deans and their designees were copied on the report, and were asked to distribute departmental feedback to departments. A copy of the rubric used to evaluate departmental reports, and to aggregate results, is attached. Detailed descriptions of various levels of achievement on the report components are included on the rubric.

Aggregate results from evaluation of reports on identified rubric criteria vary by college, and reveal the greatest *institution-level* strength is in the area of mission statement (*see Table 3*).

Areas for greatest growth potential across the institution include (*see Table 3*)

- summary of the prior year's assessment, including impact of the same on the current cycle of assessment
- clear identification of how the identified student product provides evidence of learning on the identified outcome
- reporting of data in a clear and appropriate format
- communication of assessment activities to relevant stakeholders

Table 3: Aggregate results by rubric components

	No Evidence	Developing	Developed	Highly-Developed	TOTAL # of Reports	TOTAL # Developed or Highly-Developed	Percent Developed/Highly-Developed
Prior Year Summary	43	13	34	4	94	38	40%
Mission	12	0	78	4	94	82	87%
Goals	17	6	62	9	94	71	76%
Objectives	18	9	55	12	94	67	71%
DLO	15	12	60	7	94	67	71%
Components	31	11	43	9	94	52	55%
Evidence	15	32	46	1	94	47	50%
Data	26	16	45	7	94	52	55%
Interpretation	22	12	53	7	94	60	64%
Engagement	21	14	56	3	94	59	63%
Impact	26	10	58	0	94	58	62%
Assessment Process	16	16	59	3	94	62	66%
Communication	26	49	16	3	94	19	20%

Each report was then given an overall summary evaluation of

- “does not provide convincing evidence that assessment of learning has taken place”
- “provides evidence that the department is working toward meaningful assessment of student learning, but improvements are needed”
- “provides convincing evidence that the department is doing assessment well”

NMSU’s goal for 2013-14 reporting was for 80% of departments to be in the “provides evidence that the department is working toward meaningful assessment of student learning, but improvements are needed” or “provides convincing evidence that the department is doing assessment well” levels. Reports received Fall 2014 indicate 67% of departments provided convincing evidence that the department is ‘doing assessment well’ and 78% of reports either provide convincing evidence that the department is ‘doing assessment well’ or that the department is working toward meaningful assessment of student learning (see Table 4). Given that the number and percentage of departments reporting increased significantly in this reporting cycle, it is not surprising that the percentage of reports meeting the higher levels of achievement is slightly below the benchmark.

Table 4: Overall Summary of Departmental Assessment

SUMMARY/OVERALL				
No Evidence	Working Toward Meaningful Assessment	Convincing Evidence	% Convincing Evidence	% Convincing Evidence or Working Toward Meaningful Assessment
17	16	61	67%	78%

Departmental reports demonstrate significant variance in levels of effective assessment. Each college has some departments that demonstrate strong assessment practices, and others that continue to struggle with, or simply have not implemented assessment. In the midst of these two extremes, most departments have some sort of assessment practice documented. Based on departmental reports and conversations with college Deans, challenges across the institution can be categorized in the following ways.

1. Lack of expertise in assessment practices
 - Faculty do not have a clear understanding that the purpose of assessment is to improve student learning and strengthen department/program weaknesses
 - Faculty perceive a need for assessment to ‘prove everything is wonderful’
 - Faculty feel ill-equipped or less-than confident in their own assessment practices (some of which may be quite strong)
2. Misplaced responsibility for assessment implementation and response
 - Designation of departmental assessment to one or two faculty members, with little departmental engagement or investment in the process – this negates effective assessment that serves to strengthen the department/program
 - Reliance on capstone instructors to ‘fix’ any identified challenges in student learning, rather than approaching the challenge at the departmental/program level
 - Effective assessment reporting that belies inclusive faculty participation
3. Angst about the assessment processes/requirements
 - Faculty and/or department heads perceive the assessment process as invaluable or duplicitous (it is my experience that this is usually coupled with a misunderstanding of the purpose of assessment)
 - Faculty perceive assessment solely or primarily as externally mandated

All of the above likely contribute to areas identified in *Table 3* as areas for growth. For example, a misconception about the purpose of assessment often leads to assessment that is *not* used to inform the department/program about strengths and weaknesses; the process is an end itself rather than one that provides useful information about opportunities to strengthen programs. As a result, there is little or no faculty engagement at the departmental level in reviewing and interpreting assessment findings that result in constructive actions for program improvement.

ACTION ITEMS

The following actions are intended to respond to challenges identified through review of departmental assessment reports.

1. Implementation of WEAVE online assessment reporting should facilitate improved reporting and consistency of reporting across and in departments. Summary of the prior year's assessment is encapsulated in the WEAVE system. Archives also allow for consistency in reporting when changes in personnel occur. Transparency in reporting is also accommodated through WEAVE, and users have viewing access to other assessments in the system.
2. A specific effort will be made by the Office of Assessment to provide direction to departments on appropriate ways to communicate assessment practices and/or findings to various stakeholders.
3. In conversations with some of the Deans/Associate Deans, it has become evident that some interdisciplinary programs are not included in this reporting process. Steps will be taken to determine ownership of these programs, and identify responsible parties for assessment reporting. Known programs include Engineering Physics, Molecular Biology, and the Water Resource Management Program.
4. The upcoming NMSU Conference on Assessment on March 13, 2015 is intended to support faculty, staff and administrators' understanding and engagement in assessment and the QI. There will be two sessions on Academic Program Assessment, and each session will consist of a panel from various departments that have been identified as exhibiting best practices for effective assessment.
5. I have identified various action items for myself and for the colleges in the college-level reports. These are listed as action items at the end of each college report.