

**Montana Western Assessment Committee
Report to Leadership
December 2014**

Executive Summary

The following report summarizes the Assessment Committee's activities from December 2013 to December 2014. It is intended to document and inform leadership on the continuous efforts to improve student learning outcomes at Montana Western. These efforts were undertaken to improve student learning outcomes and to comply with the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) accreditation standards.

Assessment Activities 2013-2014

The Assessment Committee's activities from 2013 to 2014 were largely focused on responding to NWCCU recommendations to improve assessment of student learning outcomes in general education courses and academic programs.

General Education. A number of actions were taken to establish student learning outcomes (SLOs) for the General Education program. These actions were reported in the ad hoc report and are duplicated below:

- Montana Western administrator attended the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) States Summit in July 2013.
- Consultant hired to assist with establishment of general education and academic program assessment processes.
- Faculty Senate approved LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes (ELOs) for the General Education Program, fall 2013.
- All general education faculties were required to include student learning outcomes on course syllabi by Block 4, 2013.
- A faculty accreditation and assessment resource site was established in Moodle, November 2013.
- A SLO/ELO assessment survey was beta tested at the end of Block 4.
- The SLO/ELO assessment survey was administered four times throughout the spring 2014 term (Blocks 5 through 8).
- SLO/ELO assessment survey results for Blocks 5 through 6 were shared with departments to facilitate annual review.
- Four faculty attended an AAC&U conference, *General Education and Assessment: Disruptions, Innovations, and Opportunities*, at the end of February 2014

2014 Report to Leadership

- The General Education Committee conducted a review of LEAP ELOs in April 2014. The committee's report is attached to this report.
- Faculty requested and received financial support to conduct an all faculty meeting at the end of AY13-14. The goal of the meeting was to promote collegial discussion of Montana Western's general education program, assessment, and experiential education.
- Assistant provost attended the NWCCU meeting on year seven evaluations. Montana Western's year seven evaluation will occur in spring 2017.

Program Assessment. One seven-year program review and 11 annual program assessments were completed during AY13-14.

The Mathematics Department completed its seven-year program review. The review included an external evaluation. Recommendations from the external evaluator report included:

- Allocate additional resources to address needs in developmental courses
- Implement use of a placement exam
- Increase tenure-track teaching faculty
- Reduce teaching load for new instructors
- Adjust ratio of tenure-track and adjunct faculty from 50:50 to 70:30
- Provide administrative release for departmental leadership activities
- Support technology upgrades and instructional innovation

Academic departments and the General Education Committee conducted annual assessment and submitted reports during AY13-14. These reports are posted and available in the Moodle learning management system.

The Equine Department was informed that it needed to complete its seven-year program review by the end of AY14-15.

Assessment Activities in Progress 2014-2015

The following assessment activities were carried out during fall 2014.

- Ongoing administration of the SLO/ELO assessment survey at the end of each block.
- The provost and assistant provost attended a meeting in Missoula to address accreditation requirements. Drs. Thornton, Engstrom and Lindsay made presentations regarding the NWCCU requirements for year seven reports.
- Assessment committee members are working with several other campus committees to review the general education program guidance, review the campus catalog, and forward recommendations for catalog improvements.
- The campus registered to conduct the National Survey for Student Engagement (NSSE) in spring 2015.

2014 Report to Leadership

- The assessment committee developed a five-year plan to direct committee activities. The plan was shared with the General Education committee. The plan spans from AY2013-14 to AY18-19.
- The Equine Studies Department is currently working on its seven year program review.
- The Education Department is preparing for national CAEP accreditation review scheduled for fall 2015. The department collects large amounts of data regularly, on student performance, using Chalk & Wire and an ACCESS Database. The faculty review the data regularly and use data to inform program improvement.
- The UMW Business and Technology Department is preparing for an IACBE accreditation review scheduled for AY14-15.

Additional Updates

Meeting Schedule. The Assessment Committee met biweekly throughout AY13-14. The frequency of meetings was necessary to address NWCCU recommendations and prepare an ad hoc report to the NWCCU. Following submission of the ad hoc report, committee members determined that once-a-block meetings would suffice in the future.

Ad Hoc Report to the NWCCU. Montana Western submitted an ad hoc report to the NWCCU in February 2014. The report was prepared in response to a letter the university received from the NWCCU in July 2013. On July 30, 2014, the NWCCU issued a letter accepting Montana Western's Ad Hoc Report and stating that Montana Western met the expectations of all but one recommendation. The university was substantially in compliance with the remaining recommendation, but asked to address the recommendation in a follow-up ad hoc report due fall 2015. The remaining recommendation reads as follows.

The Commission does not find evidence that the commitment to assessment has been embraced throughout the curriculum. It is therefore recommended that the institution take immediate steps to implement frequent, regular and substantive assessment of learning outcomes in all academic programs. Furthermore, it is recommended that the assessment process explicitly connect student learning outcomes to program mission, the institution's strategic plan, the budget process and the University mission (Standards 2.C.2; 2.C.5; 4.A.2; and 4.A.3).

Student Success. In November 2014, Deputy Commissioner Tyler Trevor presented Montana University System data on UMW progress and outcome measures. His data from the MUS Data Warehouse documented a 29% increase in annualized FTE from FY06 to FY14; a pre-Experience One fall-to-fall retention rate of 65% versus post Experience One retention of 74%; a pre-Experience One 6-year graduation rate of 30% versus post-Experience One 6-year graduation rates between 43% and 55%; and an increase in annual degrees awarded from 162 in AY04 to 292 in AY14—an 80% increase.

Recommendations

The following recommendations follow from the Assessment Committee's work during spring and fall 2014.

- Continue work with the General Education Committee and academic departments to improve course and program assessment.
- Continue work toward providing evidence of commitment to assessment throughout the curriculum. Evidence of this effort includes establishment of learning outcomes for all courses and programs, publication of changes in the course catalog, regular administration of SLO/ELO survey, and annual departmental review of programs.
- Continue to support faculty interest in an end-of-year professional development meeting (after Block 8 in May)
- Support General Education Committee's recommendation to support faculty training on use of LEAP value rubrics.
- Investigate the possibility of participation in an AAC&U Summer Institute on General Education and Assessment. The 2015 Institute is scheduled for June 2 through 6, 2015 in Edmond, OK. Deadline to register is February 13, 2015. Go to <https://www.aacu.org/summerinstitutes/igea> for more information.

Committee Members

The Assessment Committee includes ten individuals who represent the interests of students, faculty, and staff. Makeup of the committee was determined by the provost.

Dr. Anneliese Ripley, NWCCU Liaison and Committee Chair
Ms. Ilene Cohen, Director of Student Success
Dr. Heather Haas, HPSS Faculty
Dr. Delena Norris-Tull, Education Faculty
Ms. Pinky Saxton, Student Senate representative
Dr. Laura Straus, Education Faculty
Dr. Judy Ulrich, Fine Arts Faculty
Ms. Charity Walters, Registrar
Ms. Jessica Winans, Director of eLearning
Dr. Eric Wright, Math Faculty

Attachment

General Education Committee, 2014 Annual Assessment Report