Report and Recommendations of the

2014-2015 Senate Ad Hoc Committee on Enhanced Learning Outcomes Assessment

University of Utah

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Senate Agenda site:

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Enhanced Learning Outcomes Assessment Senate Ad Hoc Committee Recommendations

Submitted on Behalf of the Enhanced Learning Outcomes Assessment Senate Ad Hoc Committee Members by Jennifer Garvin, PhD, MBA (Chair).

Review of Committee Charge:
Committee Charge: Undertake a comprehensive study of the process of academic assessment at the University of Utah for the undergraduate, graduate, and professional degree programs. Our charge includes the following:
1.   Create a campus-wide system to support assessment activities that consolidates current coordination and evaluation activities, aligns with currently required activities, and provides a feedback loop to each department and college.
2.   Provide recommendations for a university-wide oversight body that will track periodic review results of Outcome Assessments (OA's) in each program and evaluate ongoing improvements in student outcomes.
3.   Provide recommendations for improving access and accuracy of Office of Budget and Institutional Activities (OBIA) data to departments and colleges to assist in their yearly program evaluations.
4.   Recommend a periodic interval (e.g. yearly) for departmental and college reports to the institution wide assessment oversight body.
5.   Develop an educational assessment vision based on strong partnership between faculty and administration.

In response to our charge the Senate Ad Hoc Committee is pleased to submit the following recommendations:
Section A- Core Principles and Educational Assessment Vision
The following six core principles guiding University of Utah policies for continuous improvement of program quality and student achievement with the Academic Senate were discussed and agreed upon. We recommend that these core principles serve as a guide for the development of policies, procedures, and rules related to the data collected from the assessment of courses, degree programs, and certificates at the University of Utah.

1. All policies shall be developed in the spirit of partnership between faculty staff, and administration, with the goal of continuous, data-driven improvement of the quality of the educational experience for the students of the University of Utah.

2. All policies must acknowledge the faculty stewardship of the program curriculum, learning outcomes, and outcomes assessment. University faculty members are responsible for evaluating curricula and learning outcomes, as well as for using the resulting information to make appropriate changes to the curriculum.

3. The role of administration in curriculum management is to enable and facilitate regular program assessment and evaluation. The administration will work with colleges and departments to ensure faculty members and academic programs are implementing changes to their curricula in response to the outcomes assessment. Administration is also responsible for providing common resources (such as institution, college, or departmental-wide statistics) for assisting the faculty in

performing its assessment of expected learning outcomes. We note that it would be very helpful if negotiating arrangements with outside sources of information, such as: a) licensing test scores from the state licensing board, b) alumni surveys could be undertaken as these are some of the most valuable data in the evaluation process (particularly from the viewpoint of professional accreditors), and they are difficult to get.

4. The primary purpose of collecting data is to aggregate a collection of program assessment indicators that will be employed at the program level to improve student learning and program outcomes. Data collected for outcomes assessment and curriculum improvement should be aggregated to deemphasize the identity of individuals (students, faculty and staff).

5. Changes to curriculum as a response to outcomes assessment are performed at the program level, and these efforts are reported to administration in periodic reports.

6. These core principles emphasize transparency of data collection, reporting, and usage. These processes include a plan for archiving relevant data, as well as for making metrics and progress accessible to the appropriate constituencies in a timely manner.
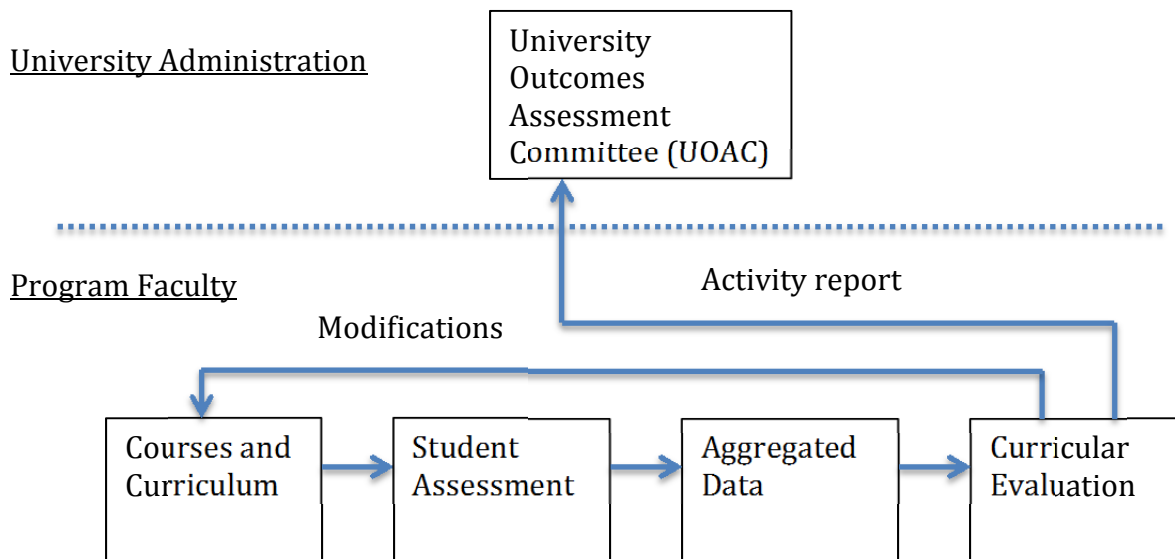
Section B- Structure for a System to Support and Coordinate Activities

According to the Six Core Principles for Learning Outcomes Assessment that were discussed by the Senate in November, we recommend that the primary assessment be done by faculty at the program level. We also recommend that faculty at this level take primary responsibility for modifications to curriculum (if any) for improvement. Based on the charge for the Senate Ad Hoc Committee, we will make recommendations regarding coordination of these efforts. We recommend that the Administration have the responsibility of ensuring that outcomes assessment and curricular enhancement be done on an ongoing, regular basis, and that they also assist the individual programs by developing and providing access to common, university-wide resources for the assessment of learning outcomes and program objectives. Based on the Six Core Principles we also recommend that polices be established for the archiving of outcomes assessment data, and that data be aggregated so as to protect the identity of faculty members, students, and staff.

We recognize that there is a wide variation in how these activities can be coordinated at the college level and department level. For example, there may be multiple departments in a given college that have similar professional accreditation requirements, so the college level may be a useful level at which to coordinate. And, if applicable to the college, coordination at the college level is also an excellent way to activate college councils from which department reports may move to the University Outcomes Assessment Committee (UOAC) from each college council as a coordinated package. Alternatively, a given college or department may develop other pathways of monitoring, analyzing, and distributing information with the goal of using existing assessment and reporting activities to the greatest extent possible.

The following are high-level recommendations for learning outcomes assessment. We also recommend that operational steps be planned and carried out after the foundational work undertaken by the Senate Ad Hoc Committee and the Senate is completed.

We recommend that the coordination of enhanced learning outcomes have the following structure:

University Administration

University Outcomes Assessment Committee (UOAC)

Program Faculty

Activity report

Modifications

| Courses and Curriculum | Student Assessment | Aggregated Data | Curricular Evaluation |

Section C- Other Recommendations
We also recommend the following:
- The faculty representation in the enhanced learning and outcomes assessment process occur primarily at the program and college level. The committee UOAC is best kept lean and two or so faculty on this committee would be good. Potential faculty members could include one graduate faculty member and one undergraduate faculty member.
- The aggregate information about outcomes be developed by each program department college, and they plan any resulting actions. Note that our charge is to recommend the development of plans for university units and to recommend how the plans are communicated. Specifics about data and operational steps are beyond this charge.
- A yearly reporting process.
- The UAOC function mainly in an advisory capacity. The authority and power for these efforts comes from the curriculum committees in the program, department, and college. The UAOC could have some or all of the following functions:
    - Track departmental activity report to ensure that individual departments/colleges are evaluating their outcomes assessment data and making changes to curriculum.
    - Report on campus-wide progress in curriculum development to SVPAA, SVPHS, President, Board of Trustees, accrediting agencies.
    - Alert SVPA, SVPHS, President, Board of Trustees regarding issues in colleges, needs for additional resources/changes.
    - Receive requests from individual programs and colleges for assistance with University-wide outcomes assessments; work with administration to develop university-wide support strategy for standardization/collection/distribution of commonly requested outcomes assessment indicators.

- o Membership should be Deans of Graduate School and Undergraduate Studies, Center for Teaching and Learning Excellence, advisors, perhaps Institutional Assessment, and a faculty member from main campus, and from Health Sciences.
  - o Yearly report to SVPAA, SVPHS and work with OBIA/ACS (and others) for development of university-wide OA infrastructure, as required.
- The role of the college in this process be based on the current curriculum committee, college council structure and charge.
- The role of the college dean in this process be based on the current configuration of the program, department, or college. Generally, the dean is the leader who provides centralized effort for the college through the council or curriculum committee structure. As such, they should have the purview of developing operational aspects of undertaking the enhanced learning and outcomes assessment process and for advocating for additional resources for university wide outcomes assessment.
- The faculty, curriculum committee chair, and the department head at the program level drive the curriculum including the plan to assess graduating students.
- Faculty see and vote on a plan for enhanced learning and outcomes assessment and review and vote on changes to the curriculum. Data related to these efforts should be available to faculty at any time.
- Resources to assist coordination be determined including partnering with the University of Utah Alumni Association or OBIA to undertake surveys, to engage with librarians and members of the Center for Teaching and Learning Excellence to revise the curriculum and to use Canvas to collect data and that the university obtain licensure results.

General next steps and discussion following completion of the Senate Ad Hoc Committee charge may include the following:

Concrete implementation of such a structure needs the following clarifications (there may be more) after the process of coordination is agreed upon. Important aspects of coordination that should be decided include:

1) The structure and purpose of the committee are tentatively called UOAC (University Outcomes Assessment Committee).
   a. Who are the members? Is this just a committee of the Academic Leadership Team (deans?) Is there a role for faculty members? If so, how many faculty members, how are they chosen, how long do the serve?
   b. Who does UOAC report to?
   c. What do they report on?
   d. How will the UOAC be staffed (i.e., minute development, reports, requests, etc.)?
   e. What data is required by the UAOC from the colleges/departments?
   f. Does UAOC have the power to initiate action or implement policy, or is its role mainly advisory?
      Draft UOAC interlocking functions could include:
      i. Tracking departmental activity report to ensure that individual departments/colleges are evaluating their outcomes assessment data and making changes to curriculum.

      ii. Reporting on campus-wide progress in curriculum development to SVPAA, SVPHS, President, Board of Trustees, and accrediting agencies.

     iii. Alerting SVPA, SVPHS, President, Board of Trustees regarding issues in colleges, needs for additional resources/changes.

     iv. Receiving requests from individual programs and colleges for assistance with University-wide outcomes assessments; work with administration to develop university-wide support strategy for standardization/collection/distribution of commonly requested outcomes assessment indicators.

     v. Membership could potentially be Deans of Graduate School and Undergraduate Studies, Center for Teaching and Learning Excellence, perhaps Institutional Assessment, and a faculty member from main campus and from Health Sciences.

     vi. Providing a yearly report to SVPAA, SVPHS and work with OBIA/ACS (and others) to develop university-wide OA infrastructure, as required.

     vii. Influencing a given dean/department chair who is not making needed effort toward evaluating outcomes and modifying curriculum.

     viii. Providing feedback to the department or college if the documentation is not sufficient.

     ix. Working with CTLE to develop training and having the authority to require existing and new department chairs, program curriculum chairs to attend training, and perhaps having the ability to set a policy for required training.

2) What is the role of the college in this process? According to University Policy 6-003, College Councils, "College councils shall develop curriculum and related academic programs to meet the goals and purposes of the university." Consequently, they already have an existing role in the creation and development of academic programs and curricula, and so any new policy needs to reflect this role.

    a. What is the authority, if any, of the college council to impose or require specific curricular modifications?

    b. What data is available to the college council?

    c. Is the college council allowed to add additional information or recommendations into the report which goes to the next level (dean? UAOC?)

    d. Is the college council allowed to advocate for additional resources for university wide outcomes assessment, or for implementing additional curricular changes at the program level.

3) What is the role of the college dean in this process? It would seem appropriate that they take responsibility for ensuring the yearly assessment of learning outcomes is occurring, and that changes, as appropriate, are made to program curricula and that this data be reported to the UAOC or the relevant party who will in turn report the data to the UAOC. We would also suggest that:

    a. The dean may request to see some of the aggregated data from each program and the question of how much data is important to address.

    b. The dean will work with faculty to develop specific changes to curriculum based on the results of outcome assessment activities.

c. Similarly, is the dean allowed or required to provide additional data or recommendations to the next level (UAOC)?
d. Is the dean allowed to advocate for additional resources for university wide outcomes assessment, or for implementing additional curricular changes at the program level?

4) What is the role of the faculty, curriculum chair, and department head at the program level?
   a. Does University policy proscribe a particular set of required meetings between the program faculty, the data from outcomes assessment, department chair, and chair of the curriculum committee? Or does the policy require programs to develop their own policy, and merely require that the policy be written, have certain elements (including yearly deadlines and defined deliverables to the college/UAOC) and be ratified by the department faculty?
   b. What is the minimum amount of reporting necessary at the department level?
   c. Is the report written by the chair, curriculum chair, or a subcommittee? Does the faculty need to see and vote on it each year? Or should it be made available each year to the faculty for a set period of time?

5) How are the above procedures and policies modified for
   a. Single department colleges
   b. Interdisciplinary programs
   c. Programs (if any) residing in centers, institutes, or bureaus

After accounting for the above issues, a realistic coordination process will need to be determine but might have a somewhat larger and more detailed structure such as the following:

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                    ┌──────────────┐     Resource
                    │ Trustees,    │     Allocation
University Level    │ President,   │──────────────────┐
                    │ SVPAA,       │                  │
                    │ SVPHS        │                  ▼
                    └──────────────┘         ┌──────────────┐
        Resource       ▲                     │              │  University-wide
        Allocation  ┌──────────────┐  OA Resource │ OBIA    │  OA resources
                    │ University   │  Requests    │         │
                    │ Outcomes     │─────────────▶│         │
                    │ Assessment   │         └──────────────┘
                    │ Committee    │
                    └──────────────┘
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College Level          ▲      College activity report
                       │      College OA resource request
                       │      College Curriculum resource request
                    ┌──────────────┐
              ─────▶│ Dean         │
                    └──────────────┘
                       ▲
        Resource    ┌──────────────┐
        Allocation  │ College      │   College-wide coordination
                    │ Council      │   College-wide prioritization
                    └──────────────┘
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Program Level          ▲    Program activity report
                       │    Program OA resource request
                       │    Program Curriculum resource request
                    ┌──────────────┐
              ─────▶│ Chair        │
Resource            └──────────────┘
Allocation     Curricular modifications    Program review recommendations

┌──────────┐   ┌──────────┐   ┌──────────┐   ┌──────────┐
│ Courses  │──▶│ Student  │──▶│Aggregated│──▶│Curricular│
│ and      │   │Assessment│   │ Data     │   │Evaluation│
│Curriculum│   │          │   │          │   │          │
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