Executive Summary

In 2013-2014, the University of Rochester continued to expand and fine-tune its mechanisms for promoting student learning assessment. Most notably, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) evaluation team visited from April 30-May 3, 2014 for the University's decennial reaccreditation. Learning assessment was a focal point of the evaluation, and team members examined the various schools strategies and procedures for ensuring positive student learning outcomes. The evaluators responded favorably to the University's efforts, and supported plans to generate a yearly University-wide assessment summary. The evaluation team report also suggested investing additional resources and personnel for assessment in the Provost's Office, particularly to provide expertise and support for school-level assessment liaisons.

The Committee on Student Learning Assessment (CSLA) was formally reconstituted in January 2013, with each school represented by its student assessment "liaison." The reconstitution of CSLA followed the liaisons' participation in the MSCHE reaccreditation self-study working group on student learning assessment (Standard 14). The committee also received a new charge from the Provost, who directed liaisons to promote ongoing assessment and "closing the loop" activities in the schools. The new charge also emphasized that the CSLA should serve as a resource for sharing ideas and best-practices, build a common understanding of student learning assessment across the University, and build bridges across assessment activities within each school.

The Provost's Office will hire a new senior-level administrator with experience in the field of assessment to assist the CSLA with its new mandate and in response to the MSCHE evaluation team's suggestions. This new Assistant Provost for Academic Administration will work with the CSLA and individual schools, providing training and professional development activities and assisting liaisons with the promotion of assessment goals. This individual will have the "pulse" of assessment activities around the University and will inform senior leadership of the current state of assessment on campus.

The schools moved forward to promote year-round assessment and closing the loop activities for undergraduate education. In the College, all academic units had completed at least one cycle of assessment and the Eastman School of Music (ESM) continued its three-
year assessment cycle under the direction of its new Director of Assessment. Curriculum innovations around core competencies was a focal point, with the School of Nursing (SON) experimenting to establish blends of didactic and clinical teaching in its programs. Various departments in the College modified curricula around core competencies in mathematics, leading to the development of new courses and experimental teaching methods to enhance student’s quantitative reasoning abilities. Notably, the Physics department experimented with a traditional and a modular, flipped classroom model for the teaching of introductory physics. The department found that the flipped model yielded better outcomes for students, including those from under-represented minorities and first-generation college households.

In graduate education, the schools focused on improvements in the structure of their assessment systems. The SON and the School of Medicine and Dentistry (SMD) reformulated and expanded the use of grading and evaluation rubrics for clinical competencies, clerkship evaluations, and practicums. ESM and the Arts, Sciences & Engineering (ASE) reviewed their learning outcomes for graduate education, with ASE developing a shared scoring rubric for all graduate programs. The Warner School reviewed its structure for feedback in doctoral programs, modifying the mid-program Portfolio Review and Comprehensive Exam criteria.

The schools also focused attention on student performances in courses and programs, particularly exploring communication and professional skills and competence with research and data analysis. Notably, SMD created new writing requirements and a new Writing Center for its graduate education division, while the Simon School developed new courses to improve their students ability to analyze real-world problems in their strategy and marketing programs. The University Dean of Graduate Studies also reported positive outcomes from changes in dissertation oral defenses, including greater student mastery of knowledge in their field. ESM reported changes to curriculum to provide students with a better understand of research subject protection, while ASE strengthened its Career Services and professional development activities to provide more skill-related training and career advice.

In the next academic year, the schools will continue to refine assessment activities. In undergraduate education, the College Curriculum Committee will review the Rochester
Curriculum and how the cluster system promotes achievement of learning objectives, while also evaluating next steps based on the results of senior interviews and the COFHE alumni survey. Preparation for school-specific accreditation in the Warner School, SMD and the Hajim School of Engineering will also take place in the upcoming year. The Liaison Committee on Medical Education will evaluate SMD based on newly established criteria, while the Warner School will be assessed by a newly develop accreditation agency that is the result of a merger of existing bodies. New accreditation standards from these changes will occupy the schools over this preparatory year.

Student Learning Assessment Liaisons, 2013-14

Logan Hazen, Chairman

Arts, Sciences and Engineering
Barbara Masi, Director of Education Innovation and Assessment Initiatives

Eastman School of Music
John Hain, Assistant Dean of Academic Affairs and Director of Assessment

Hajim School of Engineering and Applied Sciences
Jim Zavislan, Associate Dean, Education and New Initiatives

Office of Graduate Studies
Margaret Kearney, Vice Provost and University Dean of Graduate Studies

Provost’s Office Liaison
Alan Czaplicki, Deputy to the Provost

School of Medicine and Dentistry—Graduate Education
Linda Lipani, Graduate Registrar and Director of Services

School of Medicine and Dentistry—Medical Education
Christopher Mooney, Director of Assessment

School of Nursing
Bethel Powers, Professor and Director of Evaluation Office and the PhD Program

Simon Business School
Larry Matteson, Executive Professor of Business Administration

Warner School of Education
Logan Hazen, Assistant Professor (Clinical) of Educational Leadership