

UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER: The College Executive Summary Assessment Plan

Data Collection Tools and Approaches

The College's Director of Educational Effectiveness, in consultation with the College Dean, Associate Dean, the College Curriculum Committee (CCC), and program faculty developed and implemented a comprehensive student learning assessment program using both direct and indirect measures to inform continuous improvement in teaching and learning.

The assessment program addresses the overall undergraduate educational experience, including academic and co-curricular experiences, general education, and individual degree programs. The College and the various programs have clarified learning goals and objectives, developed assessment tools and implemented them to ensure precise measurement. Moreover, implementation plans ensure that assessment data fit with College and program education review processes.

Assessment of the Rochester Curriculum

The Rochester Curriculum structure addresses Middle States accreditation standards for all areas of skill development as a result of general education. The College's assessment program for the cluster system within the Rochester Curriculum encompasses direct and indirect measures of learning objective achievement including the following:

- Indirect assessment data is collected from COFHE and Arts, Science and Engineering senior surveys and CIRP Enrolled Student Survey in which students self-assess learning. The survey allows the College team to gain a student-centered sense of areas of strength and weakness in learning.
- Direct assessment method of senior exit interviews with over 90 seniors in which seniors are questioned on specific learning tasks and concrete related educational pursuits that were the result of cluster education. In addition, an indirect method, a specially designed senior survey of cluster education was implemented to gather self-assessment data and additional data on concrete, active pursuits that were the result of cluster education.
- COFHE Alumni Survey, an indirect measure, was implemented in order to gather additional self-assessment data.
- Direct measures are used in cluster courses from the Natural Sciences division. Faculty teaching cluster courses are asked to choose final exam questions that represent student achievement of three of the primary Rochester Curriculum learning objectives including quantitative reasoning, scientific thinking, and critical thinking.
- Faculty complete Faculty Course Reflective Memos to document direct assessment data and findings.
- The College faculty members review any changes in the Rochester Curriculum learning objectives and cluster system that the Curriculum Committee recommends as a result of data analysis.

Assessment of the Writing Requirement

In addition to assessment of the cluster program, College-wide assessment includes assessment of the writing requirement. The College Writing, Speaking, and Argument Program employs an incoming student placement process as well as an intensive formative assessment process as part of essay and research paper grading. In this manner, students and course instructors can use feedback from revisions of written essays and research papers to improve skills during the course. An end of term student survey asks students to reflect on learning.

Program-level Assessment in Arts & Sciences

In collaboration with the Director of Educational Effectiveness, each academic program in the College is engaged in an active program of assessment. The key goal of this effort is the development of assessment measures that are aligned with each program's learning objectives. Typically, the Director first meets with program faculty to develop degree program learning objectives, and to align them with required courses and course learning objectives. Together they create an assessment plan that includes both direct and indirect measures and an implementation plan to measure the achievement of program learning objectives. They design or choose existing assessment tools, such as senior exit interviews where students are questioned on learning, a senior capstone project scoring rubric, choose external standardized exams or scoring rubrics for specific program learning objectives, such as one for scoring lab reports. The Director guides faculty in use of the highly effective direct measure, Course Reflective Memos, where faculty review specific student work in the course that pertains to course learning objectives. These course objectives, when aligned with program learning objectives provide a rich, data-driven, portrait of student learning as they move through their degree program. As supplements, indirect measures, such as the senior or graduate student and alumni survey results for the major are gathered and analyzed annually and sent to departments for review. These departmental assessment plans are available on the AS&E Assessment website. In addition, the Arts, Sciences & Engineering assessment Web site contains useful assessment guidelines, tools and templates that programs can use for student learning assessment.

In consultation with undergraduate program faculty, the Director of Educational Effectiveness prepares an annual assessment report reviewing and analyzing all assessment data against program learning objectives. The reports identify areas for improvement, which are then presented to the undergraduate curriculum committee. The curriculum committee reviews the previous year's findings and recommendations for change, and considers whether the actions taken were sufficient to achieve program learning objectives. Once the data are reviewed with faculty, the Director of Educational Effectiveness consults with faculty in developing pilot education innovation projects that address areas of need, and assesses impact.

Another aspect of program assessment derives from the Senior Exit Interview protocol, which asks students to reflect on their overall learning experience as well as specific learning achieved as part of general education and in-major learning. In the interviews, students are taken through a series of semi-structured questions that explore the depth of learning in program core courses and senior projects. Written reports are presented to program undergraduate committees for review and action. An implementation plan for the exit interviews permits the Director to review up to six programs annually.

Assessment of Co-curricular Programs

The Office of the Dean of Students regularly uses surveys and focus groups to assess its programs. The Rochester Urban Fellows program, administered by the Rochester Center for Community Leadership, identifies eight discrete learning outcomes for students who participate in the program, and has devised pre- and post-tests to assess the extent to which students' progress toward these outcomes during the program. The Center participates in the Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership on a triennial schedule, which provides quantitative data on learning outcomes related to student leadership development, organized according to the social change model of leadership. The University was one of the participants in the inaugural implementation of this study in 2006, and has enjoyed robust response rates from students in the two implementations since then. Data from the study informs staff of key indicators which co-curricular programs are structured to impact, including community service participation and quality of collaboration with students of diverse backgrounds.

Data from both the conduct system and our CARE network is regularly collected and analyzed in order to recognize and respond to trends in student behavior. All fraternities and sororities must participate in a program called "Expectations for Excellence," through which they are assessed based upon their own goals from the previous year, and during which they establish goals for the following year. The Students Association, with guidance from the Wilson Commons Student Activities staff, oversees a similar assessment process with each of its student organizations, and mandates this assessment by tying it to funding. Through the use of the Campus Club Connection system, the Student Activities staff has (and regularly reviews) data regarding the level of student involvement in student activities.

Use of the Evidence

All Arts & Sciences undergraduate programs develop an assessment plan with direct and indirect measures, complete a data analysis process, identify areas for specific improvements, and write an annual assessment progress report. The annual program reports document cycles of continuous improvement where assessment data are reviewed, areas of concern identified, curricular improvements identified, and a plan for implementing them. The assessment process has led several departments to modify their programs.