

Report to Leadership for Academic Year 2014-2015
Montana Western Assessment Committee
December 2015

Introduction

This report summarizes the Assessment Committee's activities during the 2014-2015 academic year. It is intended to document and inform campus leadership on the continuous efforts to assess and improve teaching and learning at Montana Western. These efforts were carried out under direction from the provost and in compliance with the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) accreditation standards. The committee's actions were guided by the provost's three year charge as outlined in September 2013. The provost's charge is copied below for easy reference.

The Assessment Committee is tasked with overseeing a systematic campus plan for gathering information about student learning. It analyzes that information and shares its findings with various campus decision makers. The committee also showcases high quality pedagogical practices that have developed and flourished as part of Western's unique Experience One approach.

Focus for Year Two of Assessment Plan (2015-2016)

- Continue to monitor annual department assessment reports; work to standardize reporting formats (including visual impact), especially as they are posted on the web for external audiences
- Continue to monitor inclusion of learning outcomes on syllabi; consider developing a rotational or sampling plan to lessen committee work load;
- Consider holding a "Scholarship of Teaching & Learning" meeting to encourage cross-discipline sharing of best pedagogical practices;
- Continue to evaluate the quality and continuity of information submitted to the assessment committee; consider the value and feasibility of additional direct and indirect sources and make recommendations to the Provost

In addition to the provost's charge, the committee worked to address the recommendations in the 2014 Report to Leadership. The 2014 recommendations follow.

- 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
- 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.

Assessment Activities 2014-2015

The Assessment Committee's activities during 2014-2015 included:

- Ongoing administration of the LEAP SLO/ELO assessment survey at the end of each block. The resulting information was shared with departments to consider in preparing annual assessment reports. The information was also used to map where the SLOs and ELOs were being covered in the general education program categories. The committee found a broad distribution of LEAP ELOs across the general education program categories.
- Working with other campus committees and the registrar to review the campus catalog, update the general education program information, and recommend catalog edits. Some changes included revision of general education presentation and inclusion of general education codes to cross-reference in course descriptions and four-year course sequence plans.
- Administering the National Survey for Student Engagement (NSSE) during spring 2015. NSSE was deemed to be a valuable indirect measure of student engagement and high impact practices.
- Notifying the Equine Science Department its seven-year program review was due by the end of AY14-15. Equine department had a leadership change in spring 2015.
- The committee invited Dr. Nathan Lindsay to address accreditation requirements at the all campus fall meeting. Dr. Lindsay is the University of Montana's designated accreditation liaison officer.
- The committee chair presented Montana Western's student success metrics at the American Association of State Colleges and University's Academic Affairs Summer Meeting.

Other campus activities related to specialized accreditation included:

- The Education Department prepared for its national CAEP accreditation review scheduled for October 2015. The department collects large amounts of student performance data using Chalk & Wire and an ACCESS database. Education faculty analyzed the data to inform program improvements.
- The UMW Business and Technology Department prepared for an IACBE accreditation review scheduled for spring 2016.
- Psychology faculty administered an ETS Major Field Tests assessment of psychology program graduates. The ETS assessment instrument was administered to program graduates in 2014 as well. Psychology faculty are considering a new instrument in 2016 to "get a more fine-grained analysis".

Institutional Activities related to Mission

In accordance with Board of Regents (BoR 219) and NWCCU (Standard One) policies, Montana Western submitted several mission-related items to the BoR for review and approval. These items served to further define Montana Western's purpose and narrow its focus on experiential teaching and learning, student success, and efficient management of resources.

- Mission Review document submitted for BoR review (Item 165-1603-R1114)
- Revised mission statement submitted for BoR review (Item 165-1605-R1114)
- Core themes developed in 2011 formally submitted for BoR review (Item 165-1604-R1114)

All three items were approved November 2014.

Administrative Changes during 2014-2015

Chancellor Richard Storey announced his retirement at the end of the 2013-2014 academic year. He had served as the campus leader since July 2004. The following administrative changes occurred during the 2014-2015 academic year.

- Chancellor Richard Storey retired July 2014
- Interim Chancellor Bobbie Evans served August to December 2014
- Chancellor Beth Weatherby started January 2015
- Provost Karl Ulrich returned to faculty July 2015

NSSE Data

Montana Western received an institutional report of NSSE findings in August 2015. The 2015 Snapshot report was shared with the entire campus community during the annual Fall Conference held in August. The Engagement Indicators and High-Impact Practices reports have been reviewed and discussed by the assessment committee. They have also been shared with the general education committee. All of the institutional reports are available for faculty review in the campus learning management system, Moodle. Overall, Montana Western students' responses were not significantly different than student responses at selected peer institutions. The selected peer institutions are consistent with Montana Western's Mission Review document, which was submitted to the BoR in November 2014. The selected peer institutions include selective private institutions that use block scheduling. Montana Western students' responses were significantly lower than student responses at select peer institution for discussions with diverse others and supportive environment. Montana Western students' responses were significantly higher than student responses at select peer institutions for collaborative learning and student-faculty interaction.

Major Field reports were received in November 2015. The four major field reports summarize NSSE results for a) arts, humanities and social sciences, b) business, c) education and d) natural sciences. These reports have been reviewed by the assessment committee and have been forwarded to department chairs. The major field reports are available for faculty review in the campus learning management system.

Broader communication and distribution of NSSE findings occurred in several venues (chancellor's cabinet, academic and administrative council, general education committee, and assessment committee).

Recommendations

The following recommendations follow from the Assessment Committee's work during academic year 2014-2015.

- Continue annual academic program assessments
- Continue annual general education program assessments
- Devise formal distribution plan to share and discuss NSSE findings (e.g., NSSE nuggets newsletter)
- Develop plans for action based on NSSE findings
- Prepare timeline and plan for year-seven self-evaluation

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- Task assessment committee and general education committee with preparing the year-seven self-evaluation
- Continue to promote annual all-campus assessment discussion/training

Committee Members during the 2014-2015 Academic Year

The Assessment Committee included nine individuals representing the interests of students, faculty, and staff. Makeup of the committee was determined by the provost.

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