2019–2020 Academic Program Assessment Reports and 2020–2021 Assessment Plans: Summary of Reviews by the Director of Assessment

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This report summarizes the reviews done by Director of Assessment Lisa Borden-King of sixty-three academic programs' Assessment Reports for Academic Year 2019–2020 and Assessment Plans for AY 2020–2021. Although in places it discusses the percentages of reports displaying particular features, it should not be taken as a quantitative analysis. Instead, it identifies issues and patterns related to our academic assessment practices and how we use data from that assessment to plan and implement interventions within academic courses and programs that are designed to improve student learning.

Looking at assessment reports and plans across all programs shows us where we are collectively and identifies common issues programs should be aware of when assessing student learning and documenting that assessment. Our assessment processes are still new and still being clarified and improved. "Continuous improvement" is the watchword for developing and implementing the tools and methods that make it possible for our academic programs to make data-driven, targeted, and effective changes designed to improve how well students achieve the learning outcomes we have set.

This summary shows that among our immediate goals are to make sure that student learning goals, outcomes, and the courses in which we measure them are consistently presented and updated as needed. We also need to make sure that assessment tools and the data we derive from them are labeled and explained in ways that make them clear. We then need to commit to using those data to identify students' demonstrated strengths and issues in meeting learning outcomes, to create and implement strategies, often within courses, that address those student learning issues, and to record and track those strategies to see how well they are working and where we can improve them.

Note that seven of the sixty three program reports and plans reviewed were partly or fully incomplete because they had no completing students or were too new to have fully completed reports. Where this summary notes that sections of reports were not completed, that was with programs that did not fall under those categories. Four programs had not submitted reports by the third week of January 2021 when I collected these reviews. This summary's follows the organization of Dr. Borden-King's reviews that she submitted to programs.

1. Student Learning Goals (SLGs) and Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) match the Curriculum Map/course listing first submitted to Academic Affairs in Spring 2019 and the SLGs and SLOs that were submitted to Academic Affairs in Spring 2019 and that appear in the 2020–2021 Minot State University catalog.

Just over half of the programs had issues with consistency among the SLGs, SLOs, and course "maps" (the listing of courses in which programs primarily focus on or measure a particular SLO). These include minor wording differences between items in different locations; SLGs or SLOs missing from

the report; and, in some cases, some or all of the SLGs, SLOs, and course "maps" not being filed on the Academic Affairs Sharepoint site.

Almost all of these appear simply to be maintenance issues related to updating goals, outcomes, and courses as those change or making sure to copy goals and outcomes correctly into the assessment reports and plans. Since one goal for our assessment process is to improve our tools and methods continually, establishing processes that maintain consistency is an ongoing challenge. Part of that challenge as well is to develop robust and accessible ways to store assessment data, something that several programs addressed as part of their assessment report.

2. Assessment tools are described in the report in ways that clearly reflect their relationship with SLGs and SLOs and demonstrate that they capture the data needed for meaningful assessment of student learning.

This area has two notable issues. Just over one-third of the reports used as their assessment data course or assignment grades or other measures (such as records of participation, completion, or compliance) that appear to collect data unrelated to the Student Learning Outcomes with which they are linked. Although some programs' accreditors do require grades to be collected and reported as part of their assessment, both course and, in most cases, assignment grades aren't single-pointed enough to serve as data for a specific SLO. As we know, a student's attending an event or complying with an assignment guideline that is incidental to a particular learning outcome does not reflect that student's proficiency in that outcome.

In addition, around 40% of programs talked about the assessment tools they use, such as tests, evaluation forms, and rubrics, but did not provide examples of those tools. Having those would help assessment reports make much more sense, in particular to outside stakeholders like HLC but also from year-to-year within programs. No one has explicitly asked for those before, so a goal for this semester is for all programs to send copies of the tests, evaluation forms, and rubrics you use to Dr. Borden-King so that they can become part of the assessment-related Sharepoint directory.

One last note in this area is that if programs only assess particular SLOs in an academic year because they rotate the ones assessed or cannot assess some SLOs because of tool or data collection issues, then that program should make sure to record that rotation or those issues in the report.

3. Targets appear to be reasonable and are adjusted when clearly needed based on the data collected.

Some programs have challenges in this area because of the small number of students assessed, while others may benefit from reporting the percentage of students who scored at or above proficiency or by making sure that their targets are specific enough that it is possible to tell when they are met or exceeded. In around 17% of reports, the targets, tool information, or data were either missing or reported in such a way that it was not possible to determine targets' validity or need for adjustment.

4. How clear and complete data in the report are.

Just over 20% of reports could report data more clearly by reporting the number of students in the sample, indicating if percentage or percentile is meant, explicitly connecting data to SLGs or SLOs,

disaggregating majors and non-majors in the sample, and other making other types of refinements to their reporting. In addition, just over 15% of programs reported little or no data or simply reported that SLOs were met or not met. These issues with data reporting make it hard to determine, implement, and measure data-driven program improvements in order to improve student learning, and they also cause further issues with other elements of the report as shown below.

5. The report addresses student learning successes and issues as demonstrated by data.

Overall, the tendency is for reports not to discuss strengths as well as weaknesses. Around 17% of reports do not recommend changes to improve student learning in all areas of weakness, or they recommend changes in data collection without addressing student learning. Around 35% of reports could not effectively address strengths and weaknesses because of data issues (some related to COVID-19), missing data, or because this section of the report was not completed.

6. Recommendations to improve student learning are clearly data-driven and specific.

This is an area of focus. Over 80% of reports, excluding those programs with no completers or too new to be able to make recommendations, had issues with making recommendations that are explicitly data driven and specific. Of those, three-quarter made no recommendations for at least some student learning outcomes that were not met; made recommendations that addressed operations, assessment processes, or data collection without addressing how those would immediately improve student learning; or made no recommendations at all. The remaining one-quarter made recommendations without reference to or support from the data in the report.

Some of this can be addressed by simply making the links between data and recommendations more explicit, and that will be aided by making sure that data in reports is clear and complete. Another way of addressing this is to remember that even though academic assessment is "program" assessment, it primarily addresses *degree* programs rather than programs as administrative or operational units. If most of the recommendations and interventions focus on student learning in courses, then they likely are on-point.

7. Improvements tracked on the "Three-Year" table.

This table is still hard to understand and use. Changes and revisions are ongoing and being communicated to programs by Program Assessment Liaisons for those programs feedback. Given that, close to half of the reports did not clearly track improvements directly related to student learning; missed tracking items that were discussed in the report; tracked items not mentioned in this or previous reports; or, could not track items because of data issues. Around one-third of programs did not complete this part of the assessment report. This is still a learning process.

8. Operational goals are in place.

This part worked well. Around 10% of reports reported on but did not establish formal operational goals, while around 8% of reports (excluding new programs still establishing goals) did not complete this section.

9. The 2020–2021 Assessment Plan addresses issues raised in the 2019–2021 Assessment

Report.

Around one-third of programs either did not submit a completed assessment plan or need to revise their plans before the end of this semester to address issues or changes described in the report.