

SECTION 2: ASSESSMENT

UWSP will assess student learning within both the General Education Program and the various department-level academic programs. The purpose of assessment is to ensure the continuous improvement of student learning by informing all choices related to the curricular and instructional changes, programs, and policies that contribute to student success. In this way, assessment is intended to provide the foundation for academic planning and decision making.

THE ASSESSMENT PLAN

The evaluation of student learning will move beyond the purely anecdotal and personal experiences of individual faculty or departments to study the undergraduate experience as a whole. In this way, assessment will provide information for use in decision making related to the continuous improvement of teaching and learning, department review, and other key institutional outcomes. Intentional coordination of efforts is the key to the assessment plan, with each effort centered on a model of continuous improvement with student learning as the focus. Program-level assessment will be carried out by academic departments that submit reports to the Assessment Subcommittee; the assessment of general education will be the responsibility of the General Education Committee; and institutional-level assessment (which will inform the work of both the Assessment Subcommittee and the General Education Committee) will be administered by the Office of Policy Analysis and Planning.

The assessment of undergraduate programs at UWSP will have four components:

1. an analysis of new student attributes and prior experiences;
2. an evaluation of learning within the general education curriculum;
3. an evaluation of learning within department-level academic programs; and
4. institutional-level measures, including surveys of student perceptions and a value-added measurement of student learning from the freshman to senior years.

ANALYSIS OF NEW STUDENT ABILITIES

The knowledge, skills and perspectives outlined previously need to be analyzed first among our new students, primarily the incoming freshmen. The regent-mandated placement tests of verbal and quantitative skills already help place students in the most appropriate English, math, and foreign language courses as well as identify students in need of remedial work. The placement test results are integrated as a second component of a freshman profile in the larger assessment program. Finally, an inventory administered to new freshmen helps identify our new students' values and perspectives. These components help us understand freshman knowledge, skills and perspectives.

GENERAL EDUCATION ASSESSMENT

The assessment of student learning in the General Education curriculum will be the responsibility of the General Education Committee.

[To be determined by the Faculty Senate during Step 6 of the General Education reform process...]

DEPARTMENT-LEVEL PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

Each department* has the responsibility to assess student learning within its undergraduate and graduate programs and to analyze and use the results to modify the program outcomes or curriculum where necessary to ensure the continuous improvement of student learning.

* Here, “department” is defined to include departments, divisions, and schools depending on the college involved, or in some cases, interdisciplinary programs. In the case of the College of Natural Resources, “department” refers to the entire college excluding the Department of Paper Science and Engineering.

Departments shall determine the methods of assessment and the instruments to be used that best meet their needs. These must provide information that can be used to identify curricular and instructional strengths and weaknesses.

Oversight of department-level program assessment will be the responsibility of the Assessment Subcommittee, a permanent subcommittee of the Academic Affairs Committee (AAC). The role of the subcommittee will be to:

1. develop the policies and procedures for academic program assessment;
2. assist departments in selecting and developing appropriate assessment techniques, including direct measures;
3. in concert with the General Education Committee and the Office of Policy Analysis and Planning, select, develop, and administer institutional level assessment procedures and instruments consonant with UWSP's Mission;
4. oversee compilation of department assessment data;
5. assist departments as they update and review their assessment efforts;
6. address deficiencies in the assessment process; and
7. promote assessment through activities such as sponsoring workshops and forums, developing a web-site, publicizing assessment activities and results, and meeting with administrators.

The subcommittee will NOT

1. conduct departments reviews;
2. evaluate departments or courses;

3. assess the worth of departments or programs on the basis of assessment data submitted.

The Department-Level Program Assessment Process

Each department will keep on file with the Assessment Subcommittee a current five-year Assessment Plan denoting year-by-year how the department will gather and utilize assessment information. The plan should include the program learning outcomes for each major within the department; a curriculum map illustrating how courses within the major align with these outcomes; and an explanation of the assessment techniques or strategies that will be used to evaluate student learning within the program.

In addition, each department will be required to report to the Assessment Subcommittee on its evaluation of student learning every five years according to the “Reporting Cycle for Assessment and Department Review” drafted by the associate vice chancellor for teaching, learning, and academic programs and approved by the AAC. This reporting of assessment results is intended to be a collegial and formative process and will have the following steps:

1. The department will evaluate student learning in a written assessment report, using the format described below. (During years in which the entire department is under review, this assessment report will be included in the larger Department Self-Study Report. See UWSP Handbook, Chapter 7, Section 3.) The department must send copies of the assessment report as an electronic file to the chair of the Assessment Subcommittee, who will then forward the report to the appropriate dean and the provost.
2. Upon receipt of the report, the chair of the Assessment Subcommittee will coordinate with the department to schedule an oral presentation of its findings. The appropriate dean, the vice chancellor for Academic Affairs, and members of the campus community in general will be invited to attend the presentation. Each department will present its assessment report to the Assessment Subcommittee using a format of its choosing. Power point presentations are welcome, but not required. This oral presentation is intended to:
 - a. provide the department with immediate feedback from the Assessment Subcommittee, and
 - b. encourage an open, frank discussion regarding assessment and greater awareness of its role in the improvement of student learning at UWSP.
3. Following the oral presentation, the Assessment Subcommittee will provide the department with written feedback of its assessment report outlining the subcommittee’s conclusions and recommendations. This feedback will include

the rubric used by the subcommittee in forming its opinions. This feedback will be delivered only to the department.

Department assessment reports are intended to be campus resources and will be available to anyone who requests them. The Assessment Subcommittee is the custodian of all department assessment reports, and the reports, along with the department assessment plans, will be maintained in the Faculty Senate files.

Responses To Delinquent Assessment Reports

Because each department assessment Report is intended to provide the foundation for decision making within the unit, it is important that the reports be completed in a timely fashion. When a department fails to complete its Assessment Report according to the "Reporting Cycle for Assessment and Department Review," the provost will hold all staffing and budgeting decisions for the delinquent department in abeyance.

Extenuating circumstances can relax this policy, at the discretion of the provost, if they are communicated by the dean to the provost and Assessment Subcommittee.

Content of the Assessment Report

Each department is expected to submit an assessment report with the following sections addressed. An updated assessment plan for the next five-year assessment cycle can accompany the assessment report or be submitted to the Assessment Subcommittee by the end of the academic year in which the report is submitted.

1. **Departmental Mission:** Identify the department's mission, vision, values and/or goals.
2. **Brief Description of Departmental Improvements / Changes:** Identify and describe specific changes that have been made (e.g. to curriculum, assessment methods, etc.), based on the previous assessment report.
3. **Program Learning Outcomes:** Include the program learning outcomes of the department, specifically indicating the knowledge, skills, and attitudes students will develop.
4. **National/Professional Standards:** Include existing national or professional standards pertaining to the academic program, if these exist, and indicate how the department's program learning outcomes align with these.
5. **New / Updated Curriculum Map:** Include the departmental curriculum "map" depicting the ways in which courses, activities and requirements support the program learning outcomes.

- 6. Assessment Strategies/Measures/Techniques/Methods:** Include brief descriptions of assessment methods used in the department to assess student learning. Examples of assessment methods include exams, portfolios, pre- and post-tests, direct observation of performance, surveys (current students, alumni, employers), focus groups, and national exams.
- 7. Assessment Results/Findings/Interpretation:** Describe specifically what the assessment methods reveal about student learning in the context of the stated program learning outcomes.
- 8. Dissemination of Findings:** Describe how the findings of the departmental assessment work will be disseminated, to whom, and for what purpose.
- 9. Implications:** Describe how results will be used by the department to enhance student learning, including changes to learning outcomes and/or curriculum.
- 10. Reflections on the Department Assessment Process:** Discuss the strengths and challenges of this process including any recommendations for the institutional assessment procedures.

INSTITUTIONAL-LEVEL MEASURES

Institutional-level measures (where the university is the “unit of analysis”) will be an essential component of the assessment program at UWSP in that they can supplement other measures of student learning and provide some triangulation of data.

The Office of Policy Analysis and Planning administers standardized instruments and student engagement surveys, among others that are required for assessing institutional performance or improvement activities. Institutional-level measures can be mapped to university outcomes (for example, general education learning outcomes), which increases potential applications of the institutional data and maximizes resources.

The university will use standardized testing of freshman and seniors at regular intervals to provide a “value-added” measurement of student learning, particularly in the domains of critical thinking and writing. The measurement of these domains fulfills external requirements for accountability and also can contribute to the assessment of general education. To accomplish the latter, the standardized measures can be mapped to the general education program learning outcomes related to reading, critical thinking, writing, and mathematics. The Office of Policy Analysis and Planning will disseminate results and collaborate with the General Education Committee on the interpretation of the data for use in their assessment of general education.

Additionally, UWSP will participate at regular intervals in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) of freshmen and seniors. This, too, is used partially to fulfill

requirements for accountability, and has the potential to inform the assessment of student learning. For example, items from NSSE can be mapped to the general education learning outcomes to provide additional measures of progress and evidence of outcome achievement.

EVALUATING THE ASSESSMENT PLAN

Evaluation of the assessment plan outlined above is a task of both the General Education Committee and the Assessment Subcommittee. This evaluation will be ongoing, and faculty members have the right at any time to convey concerns and suggestions to both committees. In addition, a formal and complete evaluation of General Education assessment and department-level program assessment will be scheduled every five years, according to a schedule determined by the General Education Committee and the Assessment Subcommittee, respectively.