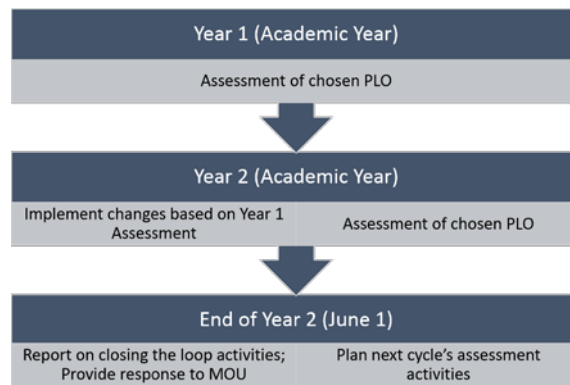


2018-2020 University Assessment Report  
Office of Program Review & Assessment, CSULB  
August 1, 2020

**Introduction to Assessment Processes**

The nature of assessment reporting has changed considerably over the last ten years even as the processes of assessment activities have remained relatively unchanged. CSULB introduced an assessment policy in 1998, and that policy was integrated into the 2005 policy on program review. Though there were some changes to policy in 2010, assessment remained untouched and any changes were procedural. In 2013, after several years of consistent annual reporting under the new policy, the institution changed to biennial reporting. The theory behind that change was that departments would engage in continuous assessment, and the one year of not reporting would enable them to close the loop as the diagram below articulates:



Programs were placed on a staggered reporting schedule, so the Division of Academic Affairs would dialogue with approximately half of all programs every year. In addition to establishing biennial assessment reporting, the Director of Program Review & Assessment also encouraged departments to focus on alignment of their Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) with institutional and general education outcomes. With the alignment mapping project, the director analyzed all PLOs across the campus, mapping them to ILOs, general education outcomes, and WSCUC core competencies. The director then shared this information with departments, encouraging them also to consolidate and / or rewrite outdated or unmeasurable outcomes. Although there was some success with the alignment project, particularly with departments revising old outcomes, the move to biennial reporting itself was not successful. In a large institution with multiple degrees and programs along with academic support units, reporting (and indeed assessment activities) floundered. Rather than view the two-year cycle as continuous improvement as the chart above suggests, many departments viewed the change as a break from all assessment activities. Other departments were unsure what cycle they were on and lamented the annual announcements from the assessment office providing reminders of deadlines.

It became clear that the institution was not as advanced in developing a universal culture of assessment, and consequently a new process was needed to encourage activities and produce

meaningful assessment. In order to reactivate assessment activities and produce meaningful assessment, as well as to address WSCUC requests that core competency assessment be analyzed at the institutional level, the Director of Program Review & Assessment built on the alignment project and developed the Core Competency Project. Although the title emphasizes the WSCUC core competencies the project was designed for departments to actively assess their program learning outcomes and articulate the ways in which their outcomes are aligned with institutional learning outcome and WSCUC's competencies. The project accomplished a number of things: it was a hard reset for assessment activities across campus; academic programs returned to annual reporting and the assessment office resumed announcements of assessment activities; every academic program on campus analyzed their Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) aligned to one of the core competencies over two years, increasing familiarity with WSCUC processes, but also creating an institution-wide discussion of them; and finally, it resulted in larger discussions of what assessment should look like on a large, state campus. The rest of this report discusses the results of the past two years.

### **Assessment Status / Submissions**

With the introduction of the core competency project, the institution saw a significant increase in the submission of annual assessment reports. In 2018, 74% (n=85) of departments submitted reports by the end of the assessment cycle. The Director of Program Review & Assessment consulted with programs that did not submit reports to assist them in developing meaningful assessment related to WSCUC Core Competencies. In 2019, submission rate increased to 84% (n=91). Outreach continued with programs that did not submit their reports, and the institution is confident that the return to annual reporting and the detailed follow-up by the Director of Program Review & Assessment will lead to a submission rate of 100% over the next two cycles.

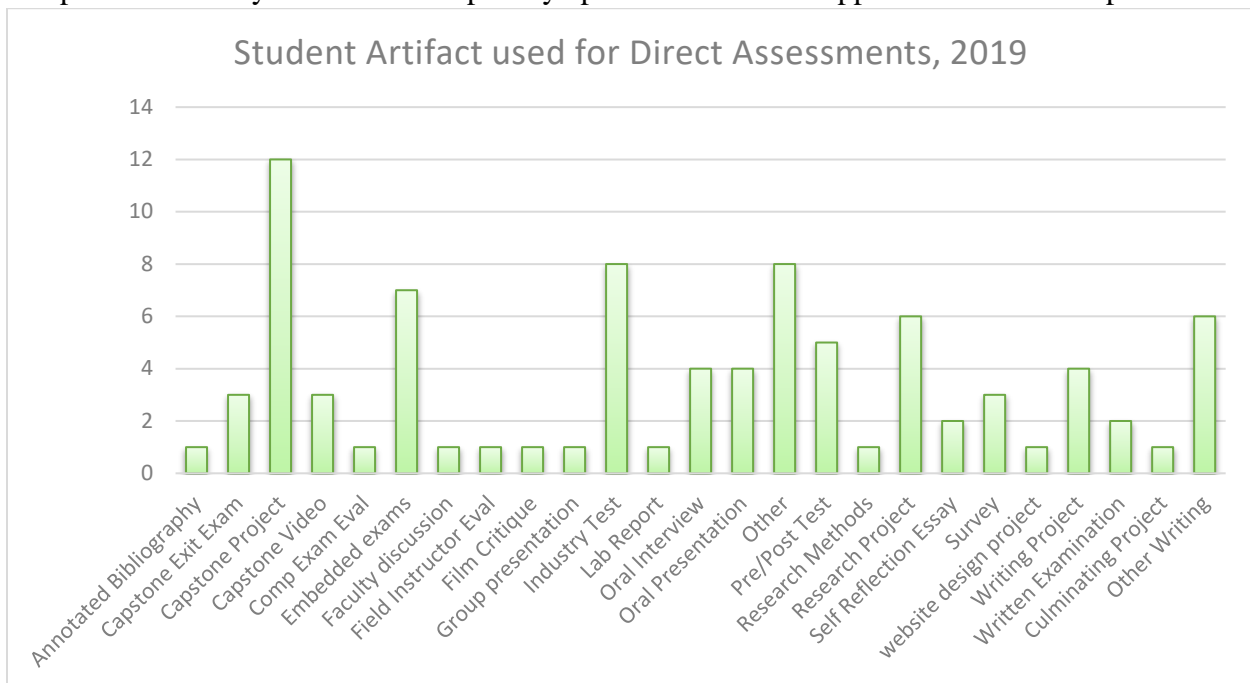
### **Overview of Results**

The WSCUC core competencies aligned with PLOs formed the basis for the past two years' assessments. Graduate programs were exempt from this requirement, but could use the framework as a basis for analysis. The institution focused on the 2013 reaffirmation handbook, which states that the core competencies may be assessed at the [program level](#). In year 1, written communication (32%) and critical thinking (32%) were the most commonly assessed. In year 2, critical thinking was the most assessed (38%):

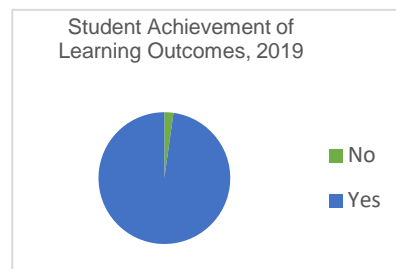
Core Competency Initiative	# of reports	
	Year 1	Year 2
Metric		
Written Communication	31	12
Oral Communication	16	16
Critical Thinking	25	35
Information Literacy	3	13
Quantitative Reasoning	10	15

It is clear that critical thinking and written communication are assessed more than other core competencies. Although many assessment reports addressed information literacy as part of their other assessment, fewer departments engaged in substantive analysis of this competency on its own. Moving forward, the Assessment Office will work with the University Library to help departments develop appropriate assessments in this area as well as encourage the Library to construct its own information literacy assessments.

Assessments across campus took a variety of forms as seen in the chart below. Since core competency skills are designed to be measured “at or near graduation,” it makes sense that the most common form of assessment consisted of some kind of capstone or senior project. The other common form of assessment includes pre/post tests and / or industry examinations. The variety of primarily direct assessments attests to the unique curricula of the programs across campus and the ways in which disciplinary-specific skills are mapped to the core competencies.



In 2018, 100% of programs noted that students met or exceeded recommended benchmarks. Feedback to departments included a number of closing the loop strategies. Of particular emphasis were reliability and validity of assessment measures, evaluation of benchmarks, analysis of student-produced work used for assessment, and finally examination of assessment instruments. In 2019, 98% of students achieved benchmarks. Part of the reason for the slight decline in 2019 can be attributed to departments increasing acceptable achievement levels in order to focus on continuous improvement. For example, one department moved its benchmarks from 3 to 4 on a four-point rubric.



## **Quality Assurance**

Assessment reports have historically been reviewed by the Director of Program Review and Assessment. Beginning in 2020-21, they will be reviewed jointly by the new Director of Institutional Assessment and the Coordinator for Program Review & Assessment. Review of assessment reports is built around each program's strengths. Every program is at a different level of assessment expertise, and to encourage departments, analysis of those reports is written as a conversation. The goal is to encourage thoughtful self-reflection from each program as well as to instruct on future assessment options. To ensure quality assurance, the Program Review & Assessment office will continue its longstanding workshop series on learning outcomes assessment.

Additionally, programs will have data available to them from institution-wide surveys and student success indicators to incorporate into their annual assessments. Analysis of the results from first institutional assessments (HERI Survey, NSSE, and COVID-19 Surveys) are expected in early 2021.

## **Use of Assessment Data**

As a result of the assessment restart, the institution is providing training and feedback about the valuable role assessment plays in ensuring continuing success, emphasizing the value of self-reflection for degree programs. All of the programs submitting assessment reports stated that assessment data will be used for program improvement and curricular changes. How those changes are implemented vary by department. A sample selection of some of those implementations are below:

- Develop special events and workshops;
- Revise assignments and / or shift course content;
- Ensure alignment with national standards and modify curriculum as needed;
- Revise comprehensive examination formats;
- Fine-tune assessment instruments; build and / or revise scoring rubrics

## **Assessment Accolades**

Several departments across all of the colleges have been engaged in assessment activities that reflect best practices in current assessment. Each year, the Program Review & Assessment Office will showcase departments that have demonstrated good assessment practices and procedures. These practices can serve as models and can easily be incorporated into a department's assessment activities and implemented for future cycles. A few of those activities are described below, and assessment reports are posted on the university assessment [website](#):

### *Dance (COTA)*

The Department of Dance convenes its assessment committee before the actual assessment to norm the rubric, thus ensuring greater inter-rater reliability in the assessment of student achievement. This activity also ensures that the assessment process goes smoothly. Using the VALUE rubric for critical thinking, the department determined that students were strongest in

explanation of issues, but struggled a bit with clarifying their position and personal perspective. Overall, however, Dance students met or exceeded competence levels for critical thinking. The department's assessments build from previous years' approaches and incorporate new techniques to better gauge student ability.

*Public Policy and Administration (PPA), MPA (CHHS)*

The Public Policy and Administration program is a graduate-only program leading to the Masters in Public Administration. The program engages in substantive formative assessments of student learning using course-embedded assessment. These formative assessments led to a summative assessment at the culmination of the student experience. The PPA department relies on direct and indirect measures to determine whether improvements in course curriculum are needed as well as program improvements and suggestions for future directions. The department used oral presentations to determine student ability to convey public policy accurately to an audience. The department aligned the oral communication assessment with a written communication submitted along with the presentation. The department then used student introductory and summative self-reflections to determine how aligned student perceptions of achievement of outcomes were with performance data from class and make necessary curricular changes.

*College of Business (COB)*

The College of Business focused on a three-pronged approach in its assessment of student learning. The first two approaches consisted of a pre- / post-test framework that relied on a series of formative assessments over the course of the semester. Over two terms, the College saw significant improvement in student ability in written communication. The pre-test highlighted areas needing improvement, the formative assessments targeted highlighted areas which were then tested at the end of the term. The third approach was to assess an analytical research paper, and the results of that assessment suggest that by the time students are well into their degree programs, they achieved degree-level proficiency in disciplinary-specific written communication. This three-pronged approach to closing the loop is a good strategy, and the College used the assessment findings to introduce targeted intervention in the form of workshops and extra training.

*Civil Engineering and Construction Engineering Management (CECEM) (COE)*

The Department of Civil Engineering and Construction Engineering Management has had a robust assessment framework for many years. Using a number of embedded course assessments across three CECEM courses including, but not limited to, projects, exams, and assignments, the department determined that student development in quantitative reasoning was satisfactory. The staggered assessments enable the department to determine where problems might arise and to develop appropriate closing-the-loop strategies—in this case, revising the presentation of material and providing authentic assessment activities. The department also determined that the volume of assessment was unsustainable and is working with the Assessment Office to develop more focused

assessments that will lighten some of the assessment burden but still provide meaningful data for continuous improvement within ABET accreditation standards.

### *Philosophy (CLA)*

The department of Philosophy engaged in a unique assessment to determine the effectiveness of student learning across multiple platforms, and how specific interventions helped and / or hindered student learning. Contrary to traditional stereotypes of online education, the department discovered that achievement of stated learning outcomes was higher in the hybrid courses. The department determined that hybrid courses offered increased opportunity to engage in practice sets and self-assessments with immediate feedback improved student learning. Consequently, the department planned to supplement face-to-face learning by increasing targeted (and early) intervention and tutoring to close the achievement gap with critical thinking. As an additional note, the assessment conducted by the department can be a model for other departments struggling to ensure effectiveness of teaching and learning in the era of COVID-19.

### *Biological Sciences (CNSM)*

The department of Biological Sciences consistently engages in high-level assessments of its GE and major courses and implements curricular changes that have had meaningful and positive impact on its students. This past year, the department assessed quantitative reasoning through its capstone examination given to all graduating seniors in each of the department's degree programs. The department provided substantive raw data that provided specific information on all learning outcomes, including quantitative reasoning. In this portion of the exam, the department noted that there were fairly large gaps between the students in each of the degree programs, suggesting that there is room for improvement in ensuring consistent quantitative reasoning skills. The assessment also thoroughly explored differences between the majors / options as well as between native student and transfer student. All of this information provides valuable clues to approaching curriculum for different groups of students. The department has shared its results with colleagues in the region and is actively working to restructure parts of its curriculum.

## **Periodic Program Review**

A separate report is submitted to Academic Senate by the chair of the Program Assessment Review Council. That report is located here: [https://www.csulb.edu/sites/default/files/u69781/parc\\_2019-2020\\_annual\\_report.pdf](https://www.csulb.edu/sites/default/files/u69781/parc_2019-2020_annual_report.pdf). Some changes to increase the meaningful review of programs have occurred over the last two years. The first major change was to implement a new report template. To encourage members to be more analytic and efficient, the council adopted a Commendation, Check, Concern, Opportunity checklist for reports, and only areas that represented concerns or opportunities would be discussed in the report. This procedural change resulted in several benefits: members were better able to write reports, and those reports were more meaningful and analytic; time from receipt of external review to presentation of report was reduced by nearly a

year; and departments and deans found the reports to be of better quality with more meaning for the programs. The council is embarking on a pilot program for self-studies in the 2020-21 academic year. This pilot program will focus on a streamlined self-study using WSCUC’s “Review under the Standards” document as a model for departments.

## **New Developments: 2020 – 21 and Beyond**

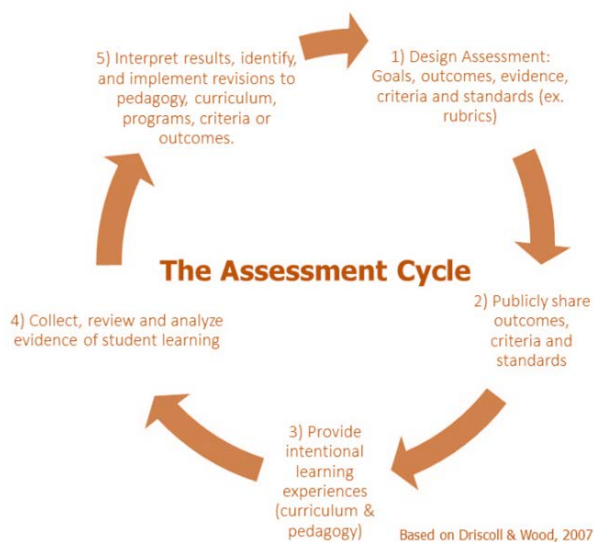
### *COVID-19 effects*

In March 2020, the campus moved quickly to Alternative Modes of Instruction (AMI) as “Safer at Home” orders were issued in California. All instruction went online and only essential personnel remained on campus. Since many programs conduct assessment during the spring term, the Director of Program Review & Assessment and the Vice Provost for Academic Programs put a moratorium on spring reporting (attachment). Any program that already completed its assessments could submit. All others were exempt from Spring 2020

reporting. In place of individual program annual assessment, the University created, delivered, and analyzed Student and Faculty surveys related to the campus response to COVID-19, and the resultant switch to AMI for teaching and learning. The results of those assessments were used to develop Faculty Development opportunities that were offered over the summer to improve the AMI teaching and learning experience. The assessment office extended the deadline for revised assessment plans to December 1, 2020, and assessment reporting would resume in May 2021. These plans are modeled after the assessment cycle from Driscoll and Wood and use a modified version of the assessment plan template from the CSU Chancellor’s Office (see attached). Although core competency reporting is no longer a requirement as it will be embedded in the new institutional assessments, programs may choose to focus on one of the competencies for their annual assessments.

### *New coordinator*

In 2019 – 20, the institution divided the position of Director of Program Review and Assessment in two. The Director of Institutional Assessment (DIA) guides institution-wide initiatives and assessment practices and serves as the Accreditation Liaison Officer. The Coordinator for Program Review and Assessment (CPR&A) will advise departments and programs on program review and assessment activities and mentor council members on crafting appropriate feedback.



### *OPIE*

The Office of Program and Institutional Effectiveness (OPIE) is planned as an Inter-Divisional partnership between the DIA, the CPR&A, and the Assessment Coordinator in the Division of Student Affairs. This planned group will also house a dedicated research analyst to assist in the analysis and distribution of institutional surveys and surveys conducted at the program and college levels.

### *Program and Institutional Assessment Committee (PIAC)*

Over Summer 2020, a university-wide Senate task force comprised of faculty, staff, students, and administrators has been working to revise program review policy, the charge and makeup of the Senate council on program review, and the policy on assessment. This is a timely and much-needed development. For example, the Senate Policy on Assessment had not been revised since its creation in 1998. Since then, research has expanded and best practices in assessment have become more sophisticated.

### **Final Summary**

After several years of fits and spurts, assessment at CSULB is back on track. The past three years of assessment activities have been robust and meaningful. Departments are learning more about effective assessment, moving beyond compliance and into activities that focus on self-reflection and improvement. The developments from the Academic Senate Task Force, and the partnerships between Student Affairs and Academic Affairs are creating assessment and program review frameworks relevant for the twenty-first century and that will provide the foundation for the development of a true culture of assessment.