Fostering student learning through a collaborative and evidence-based assessment process.

Closing the LOOP

As we near the end of another semester, it is time to submit your LASC and WI Assessment forms for Fall, 2016. There were a large number of issues with faculty completing these forms correctly in Spring 2016 – there are a number of resources specifically created to make this process as simple and effective as possible.

All of these resources and forms are located at mnstate.edu/assess/gea/lasc-forms.aspx. Please visit this website before filling out your forms.

The two most important resources are:

- A 21-minute video taking you step by step on how to fill out the form correctly (note, if you watch it at 1.5x, like your students do when watching your Panopto this is 15 min or less). The video breaks down many of the common problems, complaints and confusions that faculty have expressed when completing the form.

- Microsoft Word versions of each of the LASC forms. These are provided so you can organize your thoughts before attempting to enter the data into the Qualtrics form, and provide you a back-up in case of a computer issue halfway through completing the form.

There are a few additional points about the LASC/WI forms this year.

- A reminder that you may bundle submissions across multiple instructors teaching the same course and semesters (Fall 2016+Summer 2016 for example), although since one of the purposes of assessment is to inform our HLC Reaffirmation of Accreditation argument, which is due in March, we will be able to integrate Fall 2016 data into this report if submitted in December, as opposed to bundled with Spring 2017 and submitted in May.

> Continued on Page 2
In the first page of the assessment form, 6 additional questions have been added, 1 for each University Wide Student Learning Outcome (U-WSLO). These optional questions provide a venue for faculty to report on U-WSLOs such as preparing students for a “life of ongoing, independent learning,” “civic awareness and responsibility” or “negotiating ethical relationships with people who have different backgrounds, life experiences, cultures, beliefs, and values.” The last two U-WSLOs are points of emphasis for the 2016-2017 academic year, so while optional, if you addressed these learning outcomes during your class, a summary of student learning here would be great.

The full list of U-WSLOs can be found here: mnstate.edu/assess/uw/

Please do use data you collected and feedback you should have received on your previous submissions to shape your responses – particularly to questions about improving the student learning in the course. We can all improve. The main purpose of assessment is your self-reflection and improvement. The job of the Assessment Committee in this process is largely to support this self-reflection and verifying to HLC that our faculty are reflective practitioners.

Due to low participation in some corners of campus, expect to see more, individualized reminders.

Finally: A reminder of the common mistakes when completing the forms.

Please contact assess@mnstate.edu if you have any questions when filling out the forms.

- The text boxes on page 2 are about evidence of student learning. Statements regarding the tasks asked of students or the materials the instructor provided to students should be mentioned only as context to the main goal of speaking to student learning (or lack thereof). Or, as Dr. Phil put it, “It’s not about you,” it is about the students and their learning.

- Make sure you are addressing the right student learning outcomes: 50%+1 of the total LASC outcomes for each area that a class is listed as addressing. This means a class like PHIL 318 needs to cover and report on at least 3 of 5 LASC 6 student learning outcomes (SLOs), at least 3 of 5 of the LASC 9 SLOs, and at least 4 of 7 of the 1B/WI SLOs since it is listed as meeting goals 6, 9 and WI.

- Perhaps the most important question(s) on the form concern proposed improvements to increase student learning. While the answer is not always easy, please put reflective thought into this question – we would love to be able to report to HLC that a high percent of faculty completing the assessment forms reflected and proposed reasonable changes to either improve student learning or more accurately assess the learning that is occurring.

Thank you for your participation in LASC/WI assessment at MSUM!

Co-Curricular Assessment

“Students manage loan debt and connect with the servicer for successful loan repayment.

– Office of Scholarship and Financial Aid (OSFA)

“During the 2015-16 year, each co-curricular unit was asked to write an assessment plan for a minimum of one student learning outcome (SLO), with the expectation that additional student learning outcomes would be added as appropriate to each area in the upcoming years...As a whole, co-curricular units did a very good job assessing their outcomes.”
These statements are from the year-end report on assessment activities in co-curricular areas. The experience of the Office of Scholarship and Financial Aid (OSFA), one co-curricular department, is representative of the juncture between MSUM’s University-Wide SLOs and departmental goals. Minimizing the University’s cohort default rate and taking steps to minimize student loan debt prompted creation of the OSFA year one student learning outcome. In the annual report released by the Institute for College Access & Success entitled “Student Debt and the Class of 2015,” Minnesota was identified as the state with the sixth highest student loan debt, $31,526 for the Class of 2015. MSUM’s 2015 spring graduating class average debt of $32,948 exceeded both the state and national averages. In the past ten years (2004-2005 to 2015) average MSUM student loan debt at graduation increased 61%, from $20,473 to $32,948. The 2013 three year cohort default rate for MSUM is 5.4%. While this is well below the 10% threshold triggering heightened monitoring by the U.S. Department of Education, MSUM’s default rate is in the middle of our Minnesota State University colleagues. For the same reporting period, Winona’s rate was lowest at 3.9% and Bemidji’s was highest at 6.4%. Congress is considering holding all schools more accountable for borrower behavior by proposing regulations that would require more frequent loan counseling with students in an effort to reduce the number of students defaulting on their student loans.

The OSFA assessment plan calls for action during each student appointment. Using a pre-appointment poll staff members ask the student to identify their loan debt and servicer at the beginning of each appointment, noting whether the student accurately recalls their student loan debt at that point in time as well as the name of their loan servicer. At the conclusion of each appointment the questions are repeated in a post-appointment poll, identifying whether the student retained information about the amount of their student loan debt as well as the name of their servicer. It is anticipated with reinforcement students will learn and retain information about their student loan debt and loan servicer, the SLO.

Research suggests that reminding students of their loan balance encourages borrowers to seek more information and assistance, and may influence the student’s borrowing decisions. In addition, student loan servicers cite one of the most common reasons a borrower defaults is the borrower does not connect with their loan servicer to be fully informed of their rights and responsibilities. MSUM is proactive in addressing these issues through intentional conversations with students about the level of their student loan debt and responsibility for utilizing loan repayment options.

Data gathered in the first year of assessment indicates the activity is effective in reinforcing the two SLO objectives: awareness of student loan debt and familiarity with the student loan servicer. Feedback from the Assessment Committee during the summer of 2016 was positive; suggestions made have been discussed for incorporation to achieve short and long-term University-Wide Student Learning Outcomes.