

# **Academic Assessment Report**

## **Academic Year 2019-2020**

### **Executive Summary**

The 2019-2020 academic year was anything but typical, as in March 2020, Kutztown University, along with most universities in the nation, moved to a 100% virtual environment due to the coronavirus pandemic. Nevertheless, given that we have been methodically building a consistent, sustainable assessment culture, all academic programs engaged in assessment and submitted annual reports on their activities and deliberations. In what follows, we discuss our ongoing efforts in assessment, such as educational workshops on assessment and our grants program in support of assessment. Included as well is an overview of some of the academic programs that have carried out improvements in response to assessment data; as in past reports, we have organized this section by college.

A new feature in this report is our highlight of a program that has conducted exemplary assessment work, a result of extraordinary faculty effort on behalf of the program's students. Furthermore, no summary of the past academic year would be complete without an examination of the partial impact of the COVID-19 disruption on our students' achievement and on programs' plans for the future. We conclude with an action plan for achieving our goals for the upcoming year.

### **Professional Development**

Professional development programs are an important part of building a culture of assessment at Kutztown University. To that end, a series of events was organized during the 2019-2020 academic year. The annual Kutztown University autumn assessment day was held September 20, 2019, and Dr. Frederick Burrack, Director of the Office of Assessment at Kansas State University, was welcomed to the campus to share his expertise. After a morning plenary session on using assessment data to plan for change, Dr. Burrack conducted separate workshops for academic and non-academic units.

Using feedback culled from a survey of participants in the September assessment program, the January 2020 assessment day was designed to be faculty-led and to provide examples of assessment work that could be shared among colleagues at Kutztown University. The winter program included professional development about how to use general education outcomes when teaching a general education course, followed by a faculty panel that shared some of the success and challenges of their assessment work at our institution.

A group of staff from Academic Affairs presented at the 6th Annual Drexel Assessment Conference on September 13th. Andrea Kirshman (CASA), R. Chad Brown (Tutoring), Marlene Fares (Academic Enrichment), Lori Lentz (Registrar), and Rachel Fager (Library) presented a session titled, "Outcomes outside the classroom: A collaborative approach to developing SLO assessment in student support services." The session included information on successful

academic support assessment. Because student learning occurs both inside and outside the classroom, it is critical to assess learning experiences in various settings. The session provided specific examples of Student Learning Outcomes designed for student support services.

### **Assessment Grants**

Each year since 2008, the Division of Academic Affairs has offered assessment grants. The awards are competitive and each year several grants are awarded, up to \$5000 each. In 2019, four grants were awarded, covering these areas of assessment:

- Involving School-Based Practitioners in Program Outcomes Measurement
- Assessing Mental Health of Pre-Service Teachers
- Assessment of the Effect of First Year Seminar on Student Success
- Formative Assessment of Writing Proficiency for Spanish and German Programs

### **Exemplary Assessment Work**

For the academic year 2019-2020, the Office of Assessment highlights the outstanding work in the BS in Physics program. Their formative assessment of SLO #1, “Students will be able to demonstrate fundamental knowledge in core areas of physics,” is conducted at the end of the first year of the Physics major: An exam assessing the fundamental knowledge in electromagnetism, and optics.

In the previous academic year, even though all physics students in the class reached a successful level, an item analysis showed that more students struggled with the relation between electric field and electric potential, analyzing DC circuits, Faraday's Law, and interference by thin films. The action plan after analyzing the results was to include extra examples on these topics in classroom discussions to improve student achievement.

In academic year 2019-2020, based on the previous year's recommendations, extra examples were used when covering the relation between electric field and electric potential, analyzing DC circuits, Faraday's Law, and interference by thin films. No improvement was seen in the relation between electric field and electric potential. It should be noted that this is universally a very difficult concept with which even upper-level physics majors everywhere struggle. DC circuit analysis and Faraday's Law saw improvements by 48% and 59%, respectively. Interference by thin films also saw no improvement.

Since this topic came up towards the end of the semester, the instructor noticed a significant decrease in the effort by the students after a disruptive semester (due to COVID-19). This year's assessment tool was conducted at the end of the semester. In particular, the two students who consistently ranked at level-1 in all categories informed the instructor that they were overwhelmed by the amount of work they needed to complete and were not going to put any effort into this assessment since they already had enough points in the course to receive a good grade. After studying the overall performance of all students in this course, and in light of

the challenging times they experienced in Spring 2020, it has been decided not to make any significant changes to the course content next time it will be offered.

## **Assessment Data Drives Academic Improvements**

### **College of Business**

#### **BSBA in Accounting**

Assessment results for SLO #3, “Apply research skills and technological tools to solve accounting problems,” have enabled the Accounting faculty to improve student learning. In academic year 2018-2019, the success criterion was not met as only 38% of students achieved the benchmark. Via an item analysis, it was determined that how students communicated their findings was a weakness. The faculty decided on the following intervention: assign an additional project and stress effective written communication skills in the memoranda required. In addition, properly citing tax authority would be a point of emphasis when the instructor provided the orientation to the tax research network. With feedback from this additional project, it was expected that students would achieve the expected level of performance. In academic year 2019-2020, the above interventions did indeed improve student performance: 94% of the students (n=15) met the expectation.

#### **BSBA in Finance**

In their assessment of SLO #1, “Estimate and evaluate: students will be able to identify inputs needed to value a financial asset and apply a valuation methodology to estimate and evaluate an asset’s intrinsic value,” the Finance faculty found that the success criterion was met in all aspects of the task with the exception of an understanding of “why stock price and intrinsic value estimates are not equal.” Only 70% (n=20) of the students scored good or very good on the rubric. The action plan for moving toward enhanced student learning in this area is as follows:

- Add lecture material that explores the link between the dividend payout and the intrinsic value of a stock.
- Move the assessment to a corporate finance course, such as FIN 363, given that the value of a stock is the summation of all the expected cash flows generated by a company.
- Revise the assignment, the rubric, and the exact method to align to the higher-level course.

#### **Master’s in Business Administration**

Following their 2018-2019 assessment of SLO #1, “Demonstrate the ability to manage business information in support of decision making,” the graduate faculty implemented the following changes:

- Created a primer on financial statements that was presented to students at the start of the course.
- Rearranged the course calendar to introduce the case study later in the semester.

- Expand the case assignment to include the expectation that specific rationale to support the final recommendation.

Although the faculty noted that decision making pertaining to a solution improved little, the curricular changes did impact positively student achievement in other areas: the students' ability to analyze data, for instance, improved from a mean of 2.57 to 3.18. To work toward continuous improvement, the course calendar will again be altered to move the case study even later in the semester.

## **College of Education**

### **BSED Elementary Education Pre-K to 4**

This program has made substantial changes to address the need to improve SLO 2: "Learner differences" and specifically preparation to support English Language Learners. A new course, ELU 312 Culturally Responsive Teaching for English Language, has been developed and is going through the curricular approval process. Once approved, it will be embedded in a new block of courses that will be associated with a diverse field experience. The department is also analyzing ways of embedding culturally relevant pedagogy and specific need to support ELL learners throughout their curriculum. There has been a stronger emphasis on ELL preparation throughout the college for two years now. Survey data from alumni is showing some improvement from 49% of alumni saying they were well prepared in 2017 to 66% in 2019.

### **MEd Reading Specialist**

Related to SLO 1 in this program, "Candidates demonstrate knowledge of the theoretical, historical, and evidence-based foundations of literacy and language and the ways in which they interrelate and the role of literacy professionals in schools," there was a finding two years ago that candidates were not able to use research well to justify their instructional decision making. Incremental changes were made each year since 2017-2018 with steady improvement. In summer 2020, after changing the method of assessment from a literature review to an action research proposal, 24 out of the 24 students successfully identified and synthesized research studies, discussed the significance of their study, and outlined their action plans. Because some students still struggled describing at least one aspect of their methodology (6 out of 24), further refinements are planned, including emphasizing the use of appropriate measures related to the experimental treatments that were proposed.

### **BSED Special Education**

In their SLO 6, "Assessment," the Special Education department made adjustments in two areas to improve student performance. Through student teaching evaluations in SPU 392/393, it was found that KU teaching is generally not district specific. To remedy this, faculty will debrief with students more frequently on terminology used in local districts and communicate to the department to use that language more in our classes.

Additionally, the Special Education department faculty analyzed the IEP and Behavior Intervention Plan assignment results from Fall 2019 at the winter retreat and concluded that

students have difficulty describing students' characteristics. As a result, faculty completed a "terminology document" for students to reference throughout the program to assist with describing learner development and differences.

## **College of Liberal Arts and Sciences**

### **BA Anthropology**

All 4 SLOs are assessed every semester through a portfolio. In 2018-2019, students met the success criterion but still generated an action plan that noted areas of greatest challenge for students and addressed areas through 4 measures of pedagogical and curricular change:

- revised instructions of portfolio so students would better understand SLOs and rubrics;
- began renumbering courses to show progression through the program, with sequencing helping develop depth over time;
- introduced a sophomore-level (and transfer student) review: majors work with advisors to plan courses and other experiences, and this advisor will work with the student as the student completes the portfolio;
- revised the 8-semester plan to place ANT 335 Ethnographic Research Methods at the sophomore/spring semester so students can then use these methods in their courses throughout junior and senior years.

The 2019-2020 results were inconclusive in some cases and met in some cases. To some degree, it seems the changes need to be implemented longer to see benefits. The program faculty also are discussing better implementation of research into their classes but have not committed to specific changes yet.

### **BA in Spanish**

SLO 3, "Students will describe and analyze the products, practices and perspectives of the cultures of the Spanish-speaking world," is assessed with both direct and indirect measures. An example of continuous improvement can be found in the direct method:

Project in Senior Seminar. In AY 2018-2019, the success criterion (60% of students will score at least level 2) was not met. The faculty revised the rubric from 3 levels to 4 levels, but more importantly, changes were made to the curriculum at a lower level to improve student learning by senior year. Intercultural lesson plans and a student self-assessment protocol for intercultural proficiency development were incorporated into the Spanish conversation course (required of all majors). Analysis of student self-assessments showed that learners demonstrated awareness of intercultural proficiency benchmarks related to both knowledge and behaviors, and that they were able to identify personal strategies to further develop this skill. In the following academic year, 100% of the students met the success criterion.

This example is especially notable since the research and development of the curricular interventions were completed during the CET Summer Institute in 2019. This highlights the

connections we are striving to make between professional development for faculty and continuous improvement in student learning.

### **BS in Environmental Science**

In their assessment of SLO #4, “Students will be able to choose appropriate techniques for the collection, analysis, and presentation of quantitative, spatial, and temporal data,” the Environmental Science program faculty discovered that students did not meet the success criterion specifically for method 3, a lab assignment in ENV 220. Students (n=26) were tasked with determining how water hardness varied over time in Boehm's hot water system in relation to the functioning of the water softeners. As a group and with instructor guidance, the sample collection scheme over time was developed, and then each student applied the titration protocol to their one sample from the time series, therefore data collection of temporal data is not being assessed here. Final lab reports were evaluated in the data presentation and discussion of results sections. This assignment was started and completed with revisions before spring break/COVID-19 shutdown. The instructor determined that there were some challenges in the articulation of the assignment itself (communication of expectations will be clarified in the future), but the program faculty also reassessed the program via a review of the curriculum map, noting that temporal data is covered with little frequency. To check reliability, the assessment will be repeated once more before discussion of how to infuse time data collection, analysis, and presentation more broadly into the program so that student meet this aspect of the SLO.

## **College of Visual and Performing Arts**

### **MFA Communication Design**

In this program’s assessment of SLO 2, “Create and Develop Create and develop visual solutions in response to communication challenges,” student work from CDE 512 was examined. With a population of 5, 100% of the students were assessed as 3 or higher, 60% of the students at 4, and 40% at 3 for aspects that include meaningful images, visual hierarchy, typography, aesthetics, and/or management of complex information. These numbers are expected of students at a graduate level. However, experimentation and transformation of ideas into own-able/author-able ideas scored lower with only 40% of the students assessed as 4 or higher, and 60% of the students at 2. These numbers are below expected of students at a graduate level.

The assessment team was concerned with a trend that revealed a need for greater innovation and original thinking in terms of final product output. The faculty decided that a formal Graduate Research Project (encompassing CDE 511, CDE 512 & CDE13) guidelines and expectations document be created for the benefit of both the graduate students and project advisors. Prior, only informal expectations had been discussed. The MFA Committee will develop the document prior to Fall 2020 in time for CDE 512 to be offered again. This document will include the MFA SLOs and rubrics so students have a clear understanding of program objectives and expectations.

## **BS Cinema, Television and Media Production**

In 2018-2019 the Cinema, Television, and Media Production program noticed a deficiency in SLO 2: “Be proficient in the technical processes of cinema, television and media production.” In 2018-2019, the average of the artifacts collected for the SLO in question was 3.0, and the faculty noted that “We are looking for the score to be slightly higher. We did find that the lighting skills of many students were often an issue. We have already made adjustments to the curriculum to account for this and will likely see the result of that revision...” In 2019-2020, on the same assignment the average overall for the artifacts that were evaluated was 3.4, and the faculty noted that, “There were noticeable improvements in the specific areas like, lighting, which the department asked be addressed in the 2018-19 assessment report.”

## **BS Communication Studies**

SLO 1 “Deliver formal and informal oral presentations with varied context” was assessed in COM 010. Having done summative assessment in this area, the faculty assessed at the formative level by continuing their assessment in COM 10, which coincided with general education assessment of oral communication. Assessing at this lower level at this time provided needed data regarding initial levels of student achievement, enabling them to assess how and if senior level achievement is impacted by first-year abilities. As a result of this work, the department’s plan is to modify curriculum in the COM 10 course with a revised Master syllabus to meet SLO and student needs.

## **Refining the Assessment Process**

The deadline for the annual program student learning assessment report was moved from June to September 15. This was intended to give programs more time to analyze their assessment data and to encourage collaboration and data-informed decision making.

Precipitated by both local and state changes in policy and procedure regarding Academic Program Review (APR), in 2019-2020 we initiated an effort to link more closely the assessment cycle and the reflection and planning that form part of the APR process. Those programs launching their self-study in Fall 2019 received an assessment report that was generated by the Nuventive Improve software as part of a portfolio of data to help inform the writing and planning processes.

Beginning in fall 2020, the College of Education altered the standard assessment report template so that it aligns with the reporting system used by other programs, but also captures their assessment work. The new template also matches the CAEP reporting process, making the process more streamlined. Individual assessment methods are not identified, as those do not change from year to year. On the new template, the focus is on the analysis of the current assessment data, and planned actions to address that data. The College of Education collects data about every SLO every year, but it is not always useful to report all the data, which the standard template required. In this new format, there is a focus just on the information that is currently relevant.

## **Responding to the Pandemic**

Almost all the assessments in the Department of Business Administration were completed as planned, despite the pandemic. Thus, the Department of Business was able to compare student achievement in Spring 2020 to that of the previous Spring. The Sport Management program, however, only collected data in Fall 2019.

The most thorough assessment that the College of Education conducts, the Danielson evaluation in student teaching, was used differently in spring 2020 due to the COVID-10 disruption. For the second half of student teaching, most students either had remote experiences or alternate experiences. Because of this, supervisors were allowed to leave items unrated that they were not able to observe. Mentors were able to rate items in Domain 1, “Planning and Preparation,” and Domain 4, “Professionalism,” but a substantial number of supervisors did not rate items for Domain 2, “Classroom Environment” or Domain 3, “Instruction.” The College of Education does not have any specific findings of Spring 2020 outcomes differences from previous semesters.

The Communication Design program conducts a portfolio review as a summative assessment. Each semester industry professionals are invited to evaluate student work, using the approved rubric. In Spring 2020 the pandemic and the virtual format did not diminish participation in the event: thirty-three companies were represented by fifty external reviewers, 46% of whom completed the assessment survey. Each company saw an average of 3 students and assessed their work, evaluating their overall impression of the portfolio presentations and interviews, among other elements on the rubric. 97.1% of students were assessed at 3 or higher on the four-point scale.

In addition to the above quantitative assessment of the work, qualitative assessment from the survey indicated improvement from Spring 2019 to Spring 2020 in overall presentation skills and confidence in their work. Based on feedback from reviewers the faculty are considering the option to keep the event virtual regardless of the status of the pandemic. This will allow students to develop virtual presentations skills, an asset in an age in which more and more companies eschew face-to-face hiring in order to save time and money. Thus, the Communication Design faculty have determined that additional improvement is needed in the refinement and practice of presentation skills to help the students adapt to, and present in, a virtual environment.

## **Working Toward Continuous Improvement**

The Business Administration core program has not yet “moved the needle” on their oral communication or written communication SLO. The action plan drafted by the Undergraduate Curriculum Management Committee includes the recommendation before the Department of Business Administration faculty that there be at least one 500-word (minimum) writing assignment in each Business major pathway. This should be an assignment in a 300-level required course, not a restricted elective. Each discipline will determine in which course this assignment will be inserted.



The Geography program is challenged by low enrollments in their major courses, which not only impacts reliability of results, but at times also interferes with their assessment plans. In Spring 2020, for example, one of the required courses, and a significant assessment opportunity, GEG 330, Cartography, was cancelled due to low enrollment. To offset this, it is recommended that more SLOs be assessed each academic year, which will result in more assessment data to inform continuous improvement.

The English program (undergraduate) completed a comprehensive revision of its curriculum which is still impacting not only their assessment plan, but also the implementation fidelity of that plan. An ambitious undertaking such as the one carried out several years ago merits careful monitoring and adjustments to ensure scaffolding and alignment. The faculty continue the work of refining their assessment.

In the Counseling (graduate) programs, data always indicate that students meet all criteria. On the one hand, this outcome is to be commended as indeed students are performing well. But on the other hand, the process does not lend itself to continuous improvement.

There are three programs in Music (BA Music, BA Music: Commercial, and BA Music: Performance) that have common SLOs and who could report jointly. This would increase the sample size for their data and streamline the assessment reporting process.

The Social Media Theory and Strategy program must revisit the program curriculum map to make sure that program SLOs are addressed appropriately. One suggestion is to work on the development of appropriate assignments that are assessed to determine whether students are achieving the program SLOs, and to do so for each program SLO. The curriculum map should ensure a clear path through the major that allows students to progress and achieve all program SLOs. This is a multidisciplinary program and faculty from all departments involved should be part of the assessment process. By the end of 2020-2021, this program should have viable assessment data on which decisions about curricular changes can be made.

### **Action Plan and Recommendations**

In our previous Annual Report, we set 6 goals for all areas of academic assessment to complete during the 2019-2020 year. Of these, three were achieved:

- *Establish a three-year assessment cycle that requires academic programs to assess all their student learning outcomes during that three-year period. Connect annual assessment reports to program review.*
- *Create a later deadline for the submission of the annual assessment reports so that programs have the opportunity to reflect and discuss data and assessment results. In the past, the deadline has been in May; henceforth, the deadline will be September 15 in any given year.*
- *Continue offering professional development opportunities for faculty and staff, including the Autumn and January Assessment Days.*

Two of the goals are ongoing and will continue to focus our efforts during the 2020-2021 academic year:

- *Increase focus on using data to make decisions with the goal of improving student learning.* As the culture of assessment takes root at Kutztown University, we need to move beyond refining our assessment processes and toward the use of the data we collect to improve the learning experience for our students.
- *Create an assessment how-to guide for faculty and staff that includes a glossary of assessment terms in frequent use at our institution.* The glossary is posted on the Office of Assessment website, which has been updated periodically throughout summer and fall 2020. Additionally, we have created Nuventive tutorials, which will be published by the end of the Fall 2020 semester.

We made no progress on one of our goals:

- *Consider venues to disseminate and discuss the data and evidence provided by the National Survey of Student Engagement.* The disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic allowed no time for this initiative.

Although not listed as goals for the past academic year, we wish to note the following additional accomplishments:

- Nuventive Improve was fully implemented for use throughout all academic and administrative units, with appropriate updates in accordance with personnel and organizational changes to offices.
- Communication and transparency were notably improved. Streamlined reporting and processes for those programs with specialized accreditation, ABET, College of Education.
- [We](#) hired and trained a new complement of assessment Graduate Assistants.

Thus, in addition to the ongoing goals noted above, for academic year 2020-2021, we aim to achieve the following:

- Work with stand-alone minors to develop assessment plans, using WGS as a pilot due to their exemplary assessment work catalyzed by assessment grants in previous years.
- Revise AAC feedback rubric, particularly to include longitudinal perspectives on data collection as well as on action plans in response to that data.
- In concert with the JEDI Strategic Initiative, introduce the concept of equity in assessment.
- Involve students more in the assessment process and the dissemination of assessment results and actions