Assessment Plan

Assessment CSUMB Background Document

Introduction

California State University, Monterey Bay (CSUMB), opened its doors in 1994 framed by a distinct Vision Statement that, among other things, pledged to "emphasize careful evaluation and assessment of results and outcomes" (Vision Statement, 1994).   This commitment to outcomes-based education has earned CSUMB a national reputation for its focus on describing and assessing student learning outcomes. For example, in his book *The Learning Paradigm College*, John Tagg (2003) praises CSUMB faculty for articulating learning outcomes across the student experience, whether in courses or programs, and for creating processes to understand whether students had been achieving these outcomes. While CSUMB resembled most universities in how students make their way through the process—courses, grades etc.—Tagg posits, CSUMB has "created a pattern of information flow and feedback loops that have the potential to give meaning to the transcript by making it a real conversation about the purposes and methods of learning" (p. 214).

Yet, as several CSUMB faculty and administrators have recently suggested in an article published in *Peer Review*, while the university has done a good job of articulating learning outcomes, the demands of institution building and challenges from budget limitations have hindered the ability of the institution to "close the loop" (Tinsley, Shockley, Whang, Thao, Rosenberg, & Simmons, 2010). As they urge, CSUMB must commit to a "culture of assessment" in order to ensure that "deep and meaningful student learning is more likely to occur" (Tinsley et al, 2010, pg. 23). While CSUMB has begun to make such an investment, including enhanced assessment of student learning within program review and close articulation of CSUMB's general education learning outcomes with the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU) Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) essential learning outcomes, more is needed (AACU, 2007). As the team urges in their conclusion, the campus needs to have a "senior leadership group" to ensure that assessment is "not episodic," to develop a realistic plan for what can be done incrementally, and to pay close attention to what can be accomplished with available resources (Tinsley et al, 2010, pg. 26).

This assessment plan addresses these challenges. In this document, we propose an institutional assessment plan centered on course- and program-level assessment and built around common institutional-level learning outcomes in order to reveal student learning across the curriculum, from the general education experience through the major. As CSUMB grows as a campus, closing that feedback loop will require commitment by its faculty and administration, creative thinking, and above all, a shared understanding of what kind of student learning matters to the campus, how to know when it is happening (or not), and what to do to improve student learning into the future.

The CSUMB Assessment Plan

Campus-Wide Assessment

Assessment at CSUMB will focus on several specific goals, organized by particular structures and processes, and supported by the resources needed to achieve those goals. These goals, developed by the Assessment Committee, include the following:

- Demonstrate student proficiency at the degree level.
- Improve student learning at all levels of the curriculum.
- Provide opportunities for faculty development that inform and improve teaching and learning practices.
- Create a coordinated, integrated, flexible, efficient, and transparent assessment system that serves multiple assessment needs.
- Provide a means for evaluating and improving student learning outcomes with regard to the relevance of those outcomes to the needs of students, the university and society.

To maintain a coordinated, integrated, flexible, efficient, and transparent assessment requires the campus collect and analyze authentic examples of student learning. The following stakeholders will work together to ensure the collection, analysis, and reporting about that data.

- **Assessment Committee**, as a standing committee of the Academic Senate, provides overall leadership of assessment activities on campus.
- **Faculty Associates** in each college work with departments on Annual Assessment Projects and support Core Competency Assessment Coordinators in each core competency area.
- **The Center for Teaching, Learning, and Assessment (TLA)** facilitates collection of student work and reporting of assessment results.
- **Core Competency Assessment Coordinators** manages and supports assessment process in each core competency.
- **TLA Faculty Assessment Cooperatives** provide resources, support, and faculty development that focus on each core competency area.
- **Faculty Course Instructors** develop and administer assignments aligned to learning outcomes and assess student work in First Year Seminar (FYS), General Education (GE) courses, and the majors (upper division major courses through senior capstone).
- **Faculty Assessment Scholars** conduct assessment of core competencies using student work collected by Core Competency Assessment Coordinators and TLA in each core competency area.

To begin fleshing out these structures and processes, the campus will collect and analyze evidence of student learning for the first core competencies to be addressed, critical thinking and information literacy, during the 2013-14 academic year. This data collection year is being informed by a year of planning that occurred during the 2012-13 academic year. During that planning year, groups of faculty worked together through TLA-sponsored co-ops that focused on

understanding and assessing critical thinking and information literacy. Based on an evaluation of the effectiveness of this process, it will be modified as needed as assessment of the other core competencies is rolled out over the next four years. Figure 4 summarizes the tentative timetable.

Core Competency Assessment Cycle 2012-18

Core Competency	Plan Process	Collect and Analyze Data	Respond to Data ⎯⎯⎯⎯ Plan/ Implement Changes	Implement Changes ⎯⎯⎯ Plan next assessment	Close Feedback Loop ⎯⎯⎯ Collect and Analyze Data
Critical Thinking and Information Literacy	AY 2012-13	AY 2013-14	AY 2014-2015	AY 2015-2016	AY 2016-2017
Quantitative Reasoning	AY 2013-14	AY 2014-15	AY 2015-2016	AY 2016-2017	AY 2017-2018
Written Communication and Oral Communication	AY 2014-15	AY 2015-16	AY 2016-2017	AY 2017-2018	AY 2018-2019

The table below provides more detail about the assessment process for a core competency from planning through initial data collection, curriculum changes, and the feedback loop (revisiting changes through further assessment to see if the interventions improved student learning in the particular core competency area through two full cycles).

Table 1

Plan Process

- Identify Core Competency Assessment Coordinator.
- Identify course assignments used for assessment:
  - Directors/coordinators of academic degree programs, FYS, and GE areas ask faculty to self-identify and submit assignments from courses requiring core competency.
- Identify Faculty Assessment Scholars who will participate in TLA co-ops:
  - Invite faculty to apply to be a core competency Faculty Assessment Scholar.
  - Strongly encourage faculty whose assignments were selected to apply.
  - Select 8 Faculty Assessment Scholars per competency who receive a stipend to participate in a spring core competency TLA Co-op and up to 5 days of assessment work in summer of data collection year.
- Refine rubric and assignments to improve assessment results.

Collect Data

- Core Competency Assessment Coordinators and Faculty Assessment Scholars select a subset of all assignments for university-wide assessment in the summer. Assessment results from this subset of assignments should provide:
  - Longitudinal assessment data (e.g. FYS --> Capstone).
  - Assessment data across academic programs (e.g.relevant GE Area assignments from different programs).
- For norming activities, request for each assignment selected:
  - One (1) average (C/B level) sample of student work.
  - One (1) strong (A level) sample of student work.

- Faculty Assessment Scholars' Tasks will include:
  - Develop shared understanding of selected core competency assignments.
  - Review a sample of submitted student work for the purpose of better understanding the assignment (as opposed to assessing student performance).
  - Develop shared understanding of rubrics.
  - For each assignment, determine whether alignment with each rubric sub-component is absent, implicit, or explicit. When absent or implicit, provide formative feedback to course instructors they can use to improve assignments.
  - Determine a primary assessment question that will focus summer assessment work and generate concrete, assessable interventions to improve teaching and learning of core competency across campus (i.e. "close the loop").
  - Using the average and strong samples of student work for each assignment, norm assessments of student work using core competency rubric (so Faculty Assessment Scholars can "hit the ground running" when they begin the summer assessment work).
  - Obtain a random sample of five pieces of student work for each assignment selected. Samples of capstone work should come from programs of one or more core competency Faculty Assessment Scholars to ensure at least one of the Faculty Assessment Scholars is familiar with the capstone-level assignment.

Analyze Data

Assessment of Student Work by Faculty Assessment Scholars Using Rubrics
Example Scenario   **Selection of student work:**   ● Select five random samples of student work for each assignment.   ● Select five random samples of capstone work from one or a few programs.   **Schedule when assessing single one core competency:**   ● Day 1 & 2: Assess student work from all non-capstone courses using rubric.   ● Day 3: Assess capstone work using rubric.   **Schedule when assessing two core competencies:**   ● Day 1 & 2: Assess student work from all non-capstone courses using rubric of first core competency.   ● Day 3 & 4: Assess student work from all non-capstone courses using rubric of second core competency.   ● Day 5: Assess capstone work using corresponding rubric for each core competency.   **Results of assessment are sent to TLA.**   **TLA processes results for Assessment Committee.**
Respond to Data and Implement Changes   **Plan Process**   **Collect and Analyze Data (2nd round)**   **Close Feedback Loop**
● Assessment Committee generates a report based on assessment results.   ● Faculty Associates, Core Competency Assessment Coordinator, and Faculty Scholars disseminate results to directors/coordinators of academic degree programs, FYS, and GE areas.   ● Directors/coordinators of academic degree programs, FYS, and GE areas make changes to assignments, courses, or programs based on assessment results of core competencies.   ● Planning for next round of data collection and analysis begins.

The Assessment Committee will disseminate the results from this assessment process with the campus. The committee will review and interpret reports from the TLA about the Faculty Assessment Scholars assessment work for each core competency area and share the results of these findings with the campus, providing opportunities for faculty in academic departments to make any curricular changes based on what was learned through assessment. These efforts will be shepherded by Core Competency Assessment Coordinators and TLA. As these changes are implemented, the campus will return to the start of the process to see if any changes to curriculum shifted student learning, closing the feedback loop for the first cycle and opening the process for the next.

As envisioned at present, these processes will play out over a five year cycle for each of the core competency areas, including a year to plan (where rubrics and assignments are developed); a

year for data collection, analysis, and reporting; a year for programs to plan and begin implementing changes to improve teaching and learning in the area assessed; an additional year for programs to continue to make changes and improvements; and a year to close the loop and begin the cycle again. This cycle will be followed by another cycle of data collection, analysis, and reporting focusing on evaluating the effectiveness of any curricular changes made.

It is important to note that this assessment structure and process is meant to be an iterative one. Should the process need revising, the Assessment Committee will make changes as needed. As such, the structure is designed to be responsive to the particular circumstances on the ground while keeping a clear focus on the campus assessment goals and how this structure and process can assist the campus in meeting its assessment goals.

Program-Level Assessment

As stated in the CSU, Monterey Bay, Academic Program Review Procedure Manual (2013), "The starting point for Academic Program Review at CSU Monterey Bay is the assessment of student learning, conducted annually by program faculty" (p. 5) and included in the annual assessment project plan and report. The Assessment Committee, which coordinates efforts to measure student learning in a systematic way, encourages programs to focus assessment planning on two required assessment cycles: the university-wide core competencies assessment cycle and the departmental program review assessment cycle.

Assessment of student learning at both the university level and the program level is a multi-year process that includes planning, collecting, and analyzing data, followed by planning and implementing program changes designed to improve student achievement of learning outcomes. This process includes an integral active feedback loop, through which data collected and analyzed become the basis for programs to engage in a continuous cycle of assessing student learning, taking actions to improve learning results, and evaluating the student learning that results from those actions.

Through the seven-year program review cycle, programs should conduct at least one assessment of each of their MLOs or a relevant university-level core competency. The program review is an opportunity to reflect on the annual assessment work conducted through that cycle, to summarize it, and to identify the changes that have occurred as a result (Academic Program Review Procedure Manual, p. 6).

It is the responsibility of each program to determine the Major Learning Outcome (MLO) or core competency to assess each academic year. Faculty construct the annual assessment study around the following questions, as provided in the Academic Program Review Procedure Manual

(2013, pp. 5-6):

1. What assessment activities has your program completed, by year, since its last program review?
2. What MLO or core competency will you be assessing this year and why have you selected this MLO or core competency?
3. What is the program's critical concern/question about student learning that you will be addressing this year and why have you selected this concern/question?
4. Describe how/whether/when this critical concern has been previously assessed by your department. How will this new assessment build on the previous one(s)?
5. How will you conduct the assessment (including what materials will you collect, how many student work samples will you assess, how will you randomize the selection of work samples, what instruments/measures/rubrics will you develop to assess student work, and who will participate in the assessment)?
6. How will you analyze the assessment results?
7. How will you disseminate your findings to the department and wider audience?
8. How do you plan to close the loop on assessing this outcome or competency (plan changes, implement changes, reassess student learning)?

The annual assessment report is constructed around the following questions:

1. What assessment of student learning did you undertake in the year just ending? (Including, for example, what learning outcomes were your focus, what materials did you collect, how many student work samples did you assess, how did you select the work samples, what instruments/measures/rubrics did you develop to assess student work and who participated in the assessment?)
2. How did you analyze the results of your assessment?
3. What did you learn about your students, curriculum and/or pedagogy?
4. How are you using the results to make changes for program improvement?
5. How will you assess the impact of these changes?

Program level assessment may or may not align with one of the foci of campus-wide assessment of core competencies, as outlined above. If it does align, programs may use the campus-wide assessment of core competencies to meet their annual program review assessment requirements. Programs are encouraged to work with the Core Competency Assessment Coordinators to align their annual program assessments with the campus-wide assessments of core competencies.

Programs with External Accreditation Assessment Requirements

It should be noted that some programs on campus have received or are in the process of

receiving accreditation from outside agencies (e.g., California Commision on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC), Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE)). Each of those accreditors has certain expectations for that process, including particular ways that a program evaluates effectiveness, achievement of student learning outcomes, and other criteria for review.

The question has emerged as to what degree these programs, subject to criteria and standards of an external accreditation body, must comply with CSUMB articulated processes and standards for both program review (managed by Academic Affairs) and assessment (managed by the Assessment Committee).

The following a proposed process for how to align academic program review and assessment at CSUMB with expectations of external accreditation for these impacted programs.

Process for Alignment with CSUMB Program Review Expectations

- Programs which are subject to external accreditation should work with Academic Affairs to synchronize a calendar for external accreditation with campus expectations for Program Review so as to optimize the periodic evaluation of a program's effectiveness and avoid needless duplication of work.
- When a program subject to external accreditation submits a report to that external accreditation body as part of formal accreditation and/or a periodic re-accreditation, the program must also submit a copy of that report to Academic Affairs along with an alignment sheet indicating specifically how the report also meets the expectations of the campus as outlined in the official Program Review Manual.[1]
- Where campus expectations for program review are significantly different from expectations for external accreditation, programs must respond directly to those expectations as per the Program Review Manual, providing necessary narratives and/or data as needed.
- The report prepared as part of an external accreditation, along with the alignment sheet, will be kept on file with Academic Affairs in partnership with TLA as evidence of periodic program review.

Process for Alignment with CSUMB Assessment Expectations

- Programs which are subject to external accreditation should work with the Assessment Committee, through Faculty Associates in the Colleges, to create a plan to align

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[1] Since the standards and criteria from external accreditation vary, this alignment sheet is to be developed by the program itself and address how the report prepared for external accreditation aligns with campus expectations.

assessment expectations for external accreditation with those for the campus. This plan will include a timetable for annual assessment projects, which support both the needs for external accreditation as well as campus-specific assessment. Annual assessment projects will be submitted to the Assessment Committee as per the process outlined by that committee for the campus.

- In years when a program subject to external accreditation conducts systematic assessment of student learning and prepares a report analyzing data collected as part of formal accreditation and/or re-accreditation, the program must also submit a copy of that report to the Assessment Committee. Data collected may be used by the Assessment Committee for assessment of student learning at the campus level.
- Any assessment reports prepared by programs subject to external accreditation will be kept on file with the Assessment Committee in partnership with TLA.

General Education Assessment

At this time, the assessment of GE outcomes remains to be determined. However, GE courses will be a significant part of the assessment of degree-level core competencies. As described in the [Campus-Wide Assessment](#) section above, Faculty Course Instructors will develop and administer assignments aligned to core competencies and assess student work in GE courses. One faculty member from the GE Committee will serve on the Assessment Committee as a liaison. The Assessment Committee will work closely with the GE Committee as they develop a framework for assessment of GE outcomes.

Conclusion

CSUMB maintains a longstanding commitment to defining student learning outcomes and assessing student learning measured against those learning outcomes. This plan moves CSUMB closer to its goal of providing a systematic, coordinated assessment system designed not only to assess student learning at the course level and in the majors, but also to assess it at the degree level. Moreover, as a faculty led and coordinated process, it provides multiple points of entry for faculty interested in assessment, through teaching a course and contributing student work samples, participating in an assessment co-op, serving as a Core Competency Assessment Coordinator for a core competency area, participating as a core competency Faculty Assessment Scholar, or serving on the Assessment Committee of the Academic Senate. Moreover, it marshals important existing resources (TLA) and garners new support from Academic Affairs to fund various levels of assessment work and participation. Also, the plan is designed to articulate with important core values of the campus—collaboration, innovation, and being student centered. In short, the plan contributes significantly to moving CSUMB toward a more focused, sustained, and sustainable culture of assessment, informed by national conversations about student learning, and, above all, designed to support continuous

and continual improvement of student learning for our students.

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