

OptionE2 II -- NEASC 5th Year Report: Update on Assessment Activity at UNH

Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA)

Beginning in fall 2008, the Office of the Provost and Academic Affairs is sponsoring the pilot administration of the “2008-2009 Academic Year Cross-Sectional Administration” of the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA). This assessment activity relates to UNH’s work toward assessing student learning outcomes. The CLA is an online written exam developed and maintained by the Council for Aid to Education (CAE). The CLA is designed to test students’ critical thinking, written communication, analytical thinking, and problem solving skills.

In accordance with the CAE, the fall and spring campus administrations of the CLA will be conducted by the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL). The University will conduct the fall administration of the CLA which involves recruiting a representative sample (by college and gender) of 100 first-time (non-transfer) freshmen. In the spring 2009, a representative sample (by college and gender) of 100 graduating seniors will be recruited to take the CLA.

The CLA results will be used to demonstrate the degree of “value-added” by comparing the performance of the 100 UNH freshmen who took the CLA in the fall 2008 to the 100 UNH graduating seniors who took the CLA in the spring 2009. In addition, the University’s “value-added” scores will be averaged to determine an institutional “value-added” score. When normalized, the scores allow a comparison of the University’s “value-added” score to other institutions’ “value-added” scores.

Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA)

The University has not made a final decision about whether to formally participate in the VSA. Discussion will continue during the current academic year between senior university administrators and the Faculty Senate as well as other constituencies. Many data sources that would be included in UNH’s VSA display are already available for public viewing on disparate UNH web pages. We will either consolidate these data displays ourselves (using UNH web pages) or participate in the VSA (in which case, forms for data displays are provided). A key consideration of whether to sign on to the VSA requirement that one of three standardized student learning outcomes assessment instruments be administered to first-semester freshmen and to graduating seniors (one of which is the CLA). UNH is currently conducting a pilot administration of the CLA, which will inform our decision about VSA participation.

Academic Assessment Inventory (AAI)

In spring 2008, CETL conducted a second administration (the first was completed in 2001) of the “Academic Assessment Inventory.” The “Academic Assessment Inventory” was sent via email to all departmental chairs asking them to indicate which assessment activities their departments’ engage in and how they use assessment to improve teaching and curriculum. Department chairs who responded to the Inventory will be sent a follow-up letter via email in fall 2008 asking for artifacts (e.g., surveys, reports, rubrics, etc.) that documents their assessment activities. The information gathered by the “Academic Assessment Inventory” and the follow-up letters will be compiled and shared in the Assessment section of the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning website (with the approval of academic units).

Academic Program Reviews

During the 2007-2008 academic year, CETL staff assisted departments in developing and implementing assessments of student learning outcomes. As departments have worked to meet the requirements of the university's academic program review protocol and of their professional accreditation agencies, the staff at CETL has worked with the Whittemore School of Business and Economics (WSBE) and the Department of Mechanical Engineering to interpret and design assessments of student learning outcomes. The Center has also worked with directors of several university-wide programs (Hamel Center for Undergraduate Research, Honors Program, Center for International Education, and Center for Academic Resources) to develop, administer, collect, and analyze data to evaluate the value and effectiveness of their programs and the experiences of the students who use their services.