Student Learning Outcome Assessment at Central Washington University
2012-2013 Executive Summary
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Assessment of student learning is an essential function of Central Washington University's efforts to evaluate student knowledge, skills, and dispositions as well as overall academic and institutional effectiveness. Central Washington University offered 92 undergraduate and 33 graduate degree programs during the 2012-2013 academic year in four colleges (Education and Professional Studies, Business, Sciences, and Arts & Humanities). All of the 125 degree programs were expected to provide annual documentation of programmatic student learning outcomes achievement. One hundred percent (125/125) of academic programs submitted a report or revised plan for 2012-2013.

Table 1. CWU Programs Submitting Annual Assessment of Student Learning Reports

	2012/13	2011/12	2010/11	2009/10	2008/09	2007/08
Total undergraduate programs	92	87	87	87	88	87
Total graduate programs	33	32	32	30	30	28
Total degree programs	**125**	**119**	**119**	**117**	**118**	**115**
Undergraduate programs reporting	92	87	87	81	80	75
Graduate programs reporting	33	32	32	25	22	11
Total programs reporting	**125**	**119**	**119**	**106**	**102**	**86**
Non-reporting - undergraduate	0	0	0	6	8	12
Non-reporting - graduate	0	0	0	5	8	17
Total non-reporting	**0**	**0**	**0**	**11**	**16**	**29**
% Reporting - undergraduate	100%	100%	100%	93%	91%	87%
% Reporting - graduate	100%	100%	100%	83%	73%	40%
% Reporting - total	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**91%**	**86%**	**75%**

One hundred percent (33/33) of graduate programs submitted reports, 100% (92/92) of undergraduate programs submitted reports. The following summary is intended to provide an aggregated qualitative analysis of individual program reports and provide documentary evidence of college and university student learning outcome attainment for the 2012-2013 academic year. Programmatic assessment of student learning at Central Washington University is framed around five component questions:

1. Outcomes - are learning outcomes appropriate?
2. Methods - Are assessment methods effective?
3. Results - Is there evidence that students achieve stated learning outcomes?

4. Feedback/program Improvement - In what ways are student learning results used for programmatic improvement?
5. Previous Year Use - In what ways are student learning results used for programmatic improvement over time and is that information disseminated?

Table 2. A Summary of CWU-wide Average Component Ratings

	Outcomes	Methods	Results	Feedback/ Program Improv.	Previous Year Use
2012/13	**3.1**	**2.9**	**3.7**	**1.8**	**1.6**
2011/12	2.7	2.9	3.6	1.7	1.6
2010/11	2.5	2.7	3.2	1.7	1.6
2009/10	2.7	2.5	3.0	1.3	1.7
2008/09	2.8	2.4	3.1	1.1	1.5
2007/08	2.6	2.3	3.0	1.1	1.5
TARGET	**2 / 4**	**2 / 4**	**2 / 4**	**2 / 2**	**2 / 2**

Component 1: Student Learning Outcome Appropriateness

All academic departments have developed clear student learning outcomes that encompass all degree offerings and focus on development of student knowledge, skills, and/or dispositions (see http://www.cwu.edu/associate-provost/assessmentplans). All student learning outcomes are aligned to Central Washington University's goals to "enhance student success by continually improving the curricular, co-curricular, and extracurricular programs." as well as specific departmental and college goals as noted. This alignment demonstrates program coherence and connection with and between individual programmatic, departmental, college, and university goals, curriculum, instruction, and assessment processes.

In examining the 125 assessment reports submitted and revised plans submitted in 2012-2013, 64 programs out of 125 reporting (51%) linked all student learning outcomes with broader departmental, college, and university goals. This is an increase from 2011/2012 when 48% of programs linked all goals to standards.

Reports also indicated that student knowledge and skills were assessed much more frequently than dispositions/attitudes for the sixth year in a row. Specifically, 354 program goals were assessed across all university programs. 55 of the 354 outcomes (16%) were dispositions, 84% were either knowledge or skills. These results are the same as 2011/2012 findings when 16% of outcomes assessed were dispositions.

These findings continue to demonstrate Central Washington University's emphasis and varied approach to analyzing programmatic goals. They also indicate the need for more programs to

assess dispositions since professional attitudes are likely to be important within most disciplines.

Component 2: Assessment Method Effectiveness

Effective methods of analysis should be related to learning outcomes and the activities that support those outcomes. Assessment methods should include *direct* (i.e., tests, essays, projects, assignments, etc.) and *indirect* (i.e., surveys, focus groups, interviews) approaches to provide as complete a picture as possible as to whether students are developing targeted knowledge, skills, and dispositions. Methods should also have clear standards of mastery against which results are compared to provide assurance of student outcome attainment.

Examination of the assessment reports submitted during the 2012-2013 academic year showed that all programs who submitted reports used some form of direct or indirect method for programmatic outcome measurement (some programs did not submit details, e.g., because goals were being revised). This is equal to 2011/2012 when all programs used some form of direct or indirect assessment. Direct methods were used more frequently and proportionately more often than indirect methods. Forty-five programs (36%) reported the use of both direct and indirect methods for all goals assessed during programmatic outcome measurement. This is an improvement from 2011-2012 when 35 programs (29%) did so. Eighty-eight of the one hundred and twenty-five programs (70%) had clear standards of mastery for <u>all</u> outcomes. This is an improvement over the 63% of programs on the 2011-2012 study. Clear standards of mastery are important as it allows definitive analysis of outcome attainment.

Component 3: Evidence of Student Learning Outcome Achievement

Student learning and programmatic outcome attainment is an important element of institutional academic integrity and achievement. Assessment reports submitted during the 2012-2013 academic year indicated that 125 of 125 (100%) of CWU programs collected data and reported on student learning outcome achievement. Of the 33 graduate assessment reports that were submitted 21 or 64% presented student learning results in specific quantitative or qualitative (measurable) terms. Of the 92 undergraduate program assessment reports that were submitted, 76 or 83% presented student learning results in specific quantitative or qualitative (measurable) terms. This is similar to the 63% for graduate and the 90% for undergraduate programs who presented learning outcomes in specific quantitative or qualitative terms on the 2011-2012 report.

In addition, 70 of 92 undergraduate programs (76%) and 19 of 33 (58%) graduate programs submitted program reports that compared all outcome results to established standards of mastery. The overall percent (70%) is an increase from the percentage (62%) of all programs reported in 2011-2012. Specifically, 430 programmatic outcomes (99 graduate and 331 undergraduate) were assessed during the 2012/2013 academic year.

Three hundred and twenty of the four hundred and thirty (74%) programmatic outcomes were reported as students meeting and/or exceeding stated outcome mastery/criterion levels. This trend was stronger at the graduate level (85 of 99, 86%) and an improvement from the 2011-2012 graduate level when 71 of 88 or 81% of goals were met. At the undergraduate level, 235 of 331 learning goals (71%) were met. The percent met is very close to 2011-2012 when 254 out of 362 undergraduate goals (70%) were met. The results are significant as they provide an important element of assurance for institutional student learning and outcomes achievement.

Component 4: Using Student Learning Evidence for Programmatic Improvement

"The important question is not how assessment is defined but whether assessment information is used…" (Palomba & Banta, 1999). The assessment system in place at CWU shows that learning evidence is analyzed and used to improve pedagogy and/or program curricula. Of the 125 assessment reports submitted for 2012-2013, 81 (65%) provided documentation of some pedagogical and/or curricular change as a result of their assessment findings. This is down from the 69% of programs that documented some form of change in 2011-2012. In addition, some programs submitting assessment reports (n=77, 62%) provided evidence that assessment results and findings from previous years were being used for long-term pedagogical and curricular decision-making. This is up significantly from 53% of programs during 2011-2012.

Component 5: Student Learning Results Dissemination

Student learning is a campus-wide responsibility. Disseminating programmatic assessment results is important, particularly for increasing the transparency of how assessment processes are (and should be) used to continuously improve student learning, instruction, and ultimately programs. Whereas faculty play a key role in all aspects of the assessment process, questions of program and institutional effectiveness cannot be fully addressed without participation and collaboration with other internal (student-affairs, librarians, administrators, faculty, and students) and external (alumni, trustees, employers) audiences whose experience and potential input can enrich discussion and further broaden programmatic understanding and support. During the 2012-2013 academic year, 76 of 125 (61%) program reports provided evidence that assessment results and/or changes were reported to internal and/or external constituents. This finding is the same as the previous year (i.e., 61%).

Summary

The development of systematic and routine assessment processes by departments and programs is encouraging and improving at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. The following conclusions can be drawn from CWU's 2012-2013 degree program assessment report cycle:

1. 125 of 125 academic programs submitted a student learning outcome assessment report for the 2012-2013 academic year.

2. Programmatic student learning outcomes were again aligned this year to broader departmental, college, and university goals. This continues to demonstrate program coherence and connection with and between programmatic, departmental, college, and university goals, curriculum, instruction, and assessment processes.

3. All academic programs used some form of direct or indirect methods for outcome measurement again this year. Direct methods were used proportionately more often than indirect methods again this year while there was an increase in the number of programs using both direct and indirect methods. 70% of all academic programs used clear standards of mastery for all outcomes. This allows for focused analysis of outcome attainment.

4. The majority of CWU academic programs collected quantitative data, reported on student learning outcome achievement, and compared outcome results to established standards of mastery.

5. Students again met and/or exceeded most mastery/criterion levels this year for programmatic outcomes. This finding was stronger at the undergraduate level than at the graduate level this year.

6. A majority of CWU academic programs (65%) documented pedagogical and/or curricular change as a result of assessment findings.

7. Three assessment elements improved and two did not change from 2011/12 to 2012/13. Note: the best possible rating for elements four and five is a 2.0.

8. The number of students assessed increased from 4,446 during 2011-2012 to 9,136 during 2012-2013. Most of the increase came from the College of the Sciences and the College of Education and Professional Studies.

Suggestions for Continuous Improvement

As a result of this year's programmatic assessment reporting and feedback cycle, the following suggestions are made to improve the process and departmental performance for next year:

1. Highlight institutional assessment progress and remaining challenges to campus constituency groups.

2. Expect all departments and programs to engage in the annual assessment process and report how many students were assessed as part of that process.

3. Continue to provide professional development to assist faculty in integrating best practice assessment processes. This should continue to bolster and improve direct

assessment methods and include greater focus on indirect assessment of knowledge, skill, and student dispositions.

4. Continue to recognize and reward departments and programs that exhibit best practice assessment processes.

5. Continue to provide examples and means for programmatic assessment information dissemination through the academic assessment website.

6. CWU should raise the target outcomes for objectives 1, 2, and 3. CWU has consistently exceeded the target of 2.0 for those three objectives.

Table 3. CWU 2012-2013 Program Assessment Reports: A Year-to-year Summary

	2012/13	2011/12	Change
Programs with reports	100%	100%	⇔
Program goals assessed	354	343	↑
Outcomes assessed	430	450	↓
Students assessed	9,136	4,446	↑
Rubric element 1 - **Outcomes**	3.1	2.7	↑
Rubric element 2 - **Methods**	2.9	2.9	⇔
Rubric element 3 - **Results**	3.7	3.6	↑
Rubric element 4 - **Program improvement**	1.8	1.7	↑
Rubric element 5 - **Previous year use**	1.6	1.6	⇔
Linked all student learning outcomes to goals & mission	51%	48%	↑
Disposition goals	16%	16%	⇔
Goals categorized as Knowledge or Skills (see footnote 1)	84%	84%	⇔
Used both direct & indirect assessment methods for all outcomes	36%	29%	↑
Clear standards of mastery for all outcomes	70%	62%	↑
Graduate outcomes in specific quantitative /qualitative terms	64%	63%	⇔
Undergraduate outcomes in specific quantitative /qualitative terms	83%	90%	↓
Programs who met or exceeded learning outcomes	74%	72%	↑
% of programs that documented change because of assessment	65%	69%	↓
Previous year assessment used to make improvements	62%	53%	↑
Assessment/changes reported to constituents	61%	61%	⇔