Student Learning Outcome Assessment at Central Washington University
2013-2014 Executive Summary
As prepared by:
Dr. Tom Henderson, Director of Academic Assessment
Dr. Bret P. Smith, Assessment Coordinator

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 94 undergraduate and 35 graduate degree programs during the 2013-2014 academic year in four colleges (Arts & Humanities, Business, Education and Professional Studies, and Sciences). All of the 129 degree programs were expected to provide annual documentation of programmatic student learning outcomes achievement. One hundred percent (129/129) of academic programs submitted a report or revised plan for 2013-2014 with a total of 4,054 student assessments.

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

	# UG programs	% UG with reports	# Grad programs	% Grad with reports	Total Number of Programs	% Programs with SLO Reports
2013/14	**94**	**100%**	**35**	**100%**	**129**	**100%**
2012/13	92	100%	33	100%	125	100%
2011/12	87	100%	32	100%	119	100%
2010/11	87	100%	32	100%	119	100%
2009/10	87	93%	30	83%	117	91%
2008/09	88	91%	30	73%	118	86%
2007/08	87	84%	28	46%	115	75%

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 2013-2014 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
2013/14	**2.9**	**3.0**	**3.8**	**1.8**	**1.8**
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
2013/14 TARGET	**3 / 4**	**3 / 4**	**3 / 4**	**2 / 2**	**2 / 2**

Component 1: Student Learning Outcome Appropriateness

All academic programs 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/student-learning-outcome-assessment-plans). All student learning outcomes are aligned to outcomes in Central Washington University's Strategic Plan. This alignment demonstrates program coherence and connection with and between university goals, curriculum, instruction, and assessment processes.

In examining the 129 assessment reports submitted and revised plans submitted in 2013-2014, 44 programs out of 70 programs with data (63%) linked all student learning outcomes with outcomes in CWU's strategic plan or with departmental goals, college goals, and CWU's Mission Statement.

Reports also indicated that student knowledge and skills were assessed much more frequently than dispositions/attitudes for the seventh year in a row. Specifically, 248 program goals were assessed across all university programs. 50 of the 248 outcomes (20%) were dispositions, 80% were either knowledge or skills. These results are similar to 2012/2013 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* (surveys, focus groups, interviews, etc.) 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 2013-2014 academic year showed that all programs who submitted data 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 2012/2013 when all programs used some form of direct or indirect assessment. Direct methods were used more frequently and proportionately more often than indirect methods. Thirty-one programs (44%) reported the use of both direct and indirect methods for all goals assessed during programmatic outcome measurement. This is very similar to 2012-2013 when 45% did so. Sixty-six of the seventy programs with data (94%) had clear standards of mastery for all outcomes. This is an improvement over the 89% of programs reporting on the 2012-2013 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. Of the 16 graduate assessment reports with data, 16 or 100% presented student learning results in specific quantitative or qualitative (measurable) terms. Of the 54 undergraduate program assessment reports that were submitted with data, 52 or 96% presented student learning results in specific quantitative or qualitative (measurable) terms. This is similar to the 91% for graduate and the 100% for undergraduate programs who presented learning outcomes in specific quantitative or qualitative terms on the 2012-2013 report.

In addition, 50 of 54 undergraduate programs with data (93%) and 16 of 16 (100%) of graduate programs with data submitted program reports that compared all outcome results to established standards of mastery. The overall percent (94%) is an improvement from the 88% of all programs with data reported in 2012-2013. Specifically, 248 programmatic outcomes (62 graduate and 186 undergraduate) were assessed during the 2013/2014 academic year.

One-hundred and ninety-nine of the 248 programmatic outcomes (80%) were reported as students meeting and/or exceeding stated outcome mastery/criterion levels. This trend was stronger at the graduate level (54 of 62, 87%) and equal to the 2012-2013 graduate level when 85 of 99 or 86% of goals were met. At the undergraduate level, 145 of 186 learning goals (78%) were met. This improved over 2013-2014 when 235 out of 331 undergraduate goals (71%) were met. The results are significant as they provide an important element of assurance for institutional student learning and outcomes achievement. Many degree programs continue to develop higher standards for student learning outcomes as they are assessed and improved.

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 70 assessment reports submitted with data for 2013-2014, 63 (90%) provided documentation of pedagogical and/or curricular changes planned as a result of their assessment findings. This increased over the 65% of programs that documented some form of change planned in 2012-2013. In addition, some programs submitting assessment reports (n=64, 91%) provided evidence that assessment results and findings from previous years were being used for long-term pedagogical and curricular decision-making. This increased from 77% of programs during 2012-2013.

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 2013-2014 academic year, 64 of 70 (91%) program reports with data provided evidence that assessment results and/or changes were reported to internal and/or external constituents. This increased over the 77% of programs during 2012-13.

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 2013-2014 degree program assessment report cycle:

1. All of the 129 academic programs submitted a student learning outcome assessment report for the 2013-2014 academic year. Seventy of the reports (54%) actually contained data. This is down from 79% of reports with data in 2012/13. A major reason for the decrease was that degree programs were asked to update their student learning outcomes and link them to outcomes in CWU's Strategic Plan. As a result, many degree programs reported that they were updating assessment plans and student learning outcomes.

2. Bret Smith, faculty Assessment Coordinator, continues to work with all degree programs to update their student learning outcomes and (a) tie them to outcomes in CWU's

Strategic Plan and (b) develop timelines for when they will be assessed. He is also working with Institutional Effectiveness to develop Canvas-based assessment techniques that can improve the scope, timeliness, and quality of student learning outcome assessment data. We are also working to incorporate the updated and aligned assessment plans into the Strategic Planning Online (SPOL) platform to allow for a deeper integration of student learning data and strategic planning.

3. All academic programs with data 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. 96% of the 248 student learning outcomes that were assessed had clear standards of mastery. 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 (80%) of mastery/criterion levels this year for programmatic outcomes.

6. A majority of CWU academic programs with data (90%) documented pedagogical and/or curricular change as a result of assessment findings.

7. Three assessment elements improved and one did not change and one decreased slightly from 2012/13 to 2013/14. The average rating for element #1, "Outcomes," may have slipped a bit because degree programs were asked to link student learning outcomes to outcomes in CWU's Strategic Plan instead of to departmental outcomes, college outcomes, and CWU's Mission Statement.

8. There were 4,054 student assessments during 2013-2014. This was down significantly from the 9,136 student assessments during 2012-2013. This was due to the decrease of programs with data (70 vs. 99). No WEST-B or WEST-E scores were included in 2013-2014. WEST-B exams may be phased out by the State of Washington. Plus, the College of Education and Professional Studies no longer will require degree programs to submit "CTL 2-in-1" reports to the State of Washington. So WEST-B and WEST-E exams were not counted in 2013-14 so results will be comparable to future reports.

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. We expect the number of degree program reports with data to increase substantially from 2013/14 to 2014/15.
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, skills, 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 increased the target outcomes for objectives 1, 2, and 3 during 2013/14. CWU has consistently exceeded the prior target of 2.0 on a scale of 0 to 4 for those three objectives. The average ratings for element #3 "Results" has been at or above 3.0 for the seven years with data. That target should be increased again.

Table 3. 2013/14 CWU Program Assessment Report Summary

Degree program student learning outcomes assessed	248		
Learning outcomes linked to outcomes in CWU Strat. Plan	166	67%	
Programs that linked all student learning outcomes	63%	44 of 70 programs with data	
Student learning outcomes measuring knowledge and skills?	80%		
Attitudes/disposition?	20%		
How many student assessments?	4,054		
How many assessments were direct?	85%		
How many assessment methods were indirect?	15%		
% of degree programs with both direct and indirect assessment	44%		
Student Learning Outcomes assessed	248		
# of student learning outcomes w/ standards of mastery	238	96%	
# of student learning outcomes that met or exceeded Standards of Mastery	199	80%	
# of programs reporting results to internal/external constituents	68	97% of programs	
Changes planned in pedagogy/curriculum based on assess.	63	90% of programs	
Changes made based on prior year's assessment	64	91% of programs	

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