

## **University Strategic Framework for Assessment: A Three year Plan**

### **Overview:**

The assessment of learning at Northwestern is (and will continue to be) a school and division based effort strongly supported across the University by the senior administration. Across academic areas, assessment will continue to be faculty driven. Across administrative areas supporting co curricular programming, assessment will be driven by the appropriate units in a collaborative manner. The Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Subcommittee of the Assessment/Accreditation Council has developed this strategic framework within Northwestern's decentralized model to articulate an institutional vision for student learning outcomes assessment. This framework, while rooted in a longer term vision, is focused on the initial strategic priorities for evaluating student learning, and the action steps to achieve them, over the next three years.

### **Overarching Vision:**

Northwestern will continue to strive to be a leader in student learning outcomes assessment among its peers. Central to the University's approach is flexibility: assessment strategies across Northwestern will continue to be tailored to individual units and programs to ensure they are useful to faculty and staff and they help positively impact student learning across the University's diverse population of students.

In the long term, student learning outcomes assessment will be fully inculcated at Northwestern. Schools and units across the University will engage in assessment activities in line with the individual curricular and co curricular goals of the unit. School assessment strategies will map onto students' progression through the curriculum of individual program(s); assessment strategies in units outside of the schools will align with students' engagement in co curricular activities in Student Affairs, study abroad, research, internships, civic engagement, leadership, research,

Explore connections between curricular and co curricular assessment efforts underway at the institutional level and within the schools, Student Affairs, and other units offering co curricular programming.

Strengthen engagement in student learning outcomes assessment among faculty and staff.

Enhance and build capacity in faculty and staff to conduct student learning outcomes assessment activities at the individual, program, and school levels and to use findings to inform pedagogical, curricular, and programmatic changes.

In addition:

As leaders of their schools, Deans will support implementation and expansion of assessment efforts.

Unit leaders will include student learning outcomes assessment as a regular component of the planning process at Northwestern.

Schools will connect programmatic accreditation efforts and institutional student learning outcomes assessment efforts.

### Action Steps for 'Achieving Priorities' and Timeframe:

To achieve these short term priorities, schools and units, often in collaboration with the Assessment/Accreditation Council, will take the action steps outlined below. As needed, the schools will engage their respective curricular committees, department chairs, and/or faculties in these activities. These action steps will also be facilitated by the Searle Center for Advancing Learning and Teaching as well as the Office of the Provost.

#### YEAR 1 – 2015 16

##### Deepen Infrastructure:

Develop a formal strategic framework for assessment, including a realistic timeline for addressing the key strategic priorities.

Examine and update online tools and resources for assessment, including the Learning Assessment website and the Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Framework document, to increase their usefulness for individual faculty members and staff and for programs/schools.

- o Revised website content and locations as well as additional tools/resources developed by the Assessment/Accreditation Council will help to enhance and build capacity among Northwestern faculty and staff and strengthen their engagement in student learning outcomes assessment.

##### Increase Campus Engagement:

Conduct the third annual Learning, Teaching, and Assessment Forum to showcase **current assessment processes** and to encourage faculty and staff members to engage in assessing learning at the **course/activity level**.

- o Collective conversations and insights from the Forum will facilitate development

### Connecticut Processes:

Conduct strategic conversations with the Office of Administration and Planning to more actively engage the Program Review in encouraging schools/units to include student learning outcomes assessment in their self studies (beginning in 2016-17 year of reviews).

- o By encouraging reporting of assessment activities to the Program Review, we will

- o Identifying assessment gaps will facilitate development of support mechanisms to build assessment capability