

December 4, 2020

TO: Dr. Diane Anderson, Vice President for Student Affairs  
Dr. Jennifer Bott, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

FROM: Ciji Heiser and Karen Stokes Chapo  
University Assessment Steering Committee

RE: UASC Annual Report for 2019-2020

Despite unforeseen interruptions and the uncertainty due to the pandemic during the second half of the 2019-20 academic year, the University Assessment Steering Committee (UASC) had a meaningful and productive year. This report summarizes the key accomplishments of the committee.

### ***CULTURE OF ASSESSMENT REPORTS***

In the fall of 2018, the University Assessment Steering Committee (UASC) embarked on a project to establish an institution-wide benchmark for evidence of an assessment culture at Western Michigan University. In addition to establishing a benchmark of assessment culture, the findings from this project served as evidence of continuous improvement in preparation for the Higher Learning Commission reaffirmation of accreditation visit in April, 2021.

Academic unit reports were provided for the undergraduate, graduate and certificate levels. Out of 109 possible academic unit reports, 80 were completed (73%). For learner support units, 69 reports were possible and 56 completed (81%). Each submission focused on five areas critical to a culture of assessment: goals, learning outcomes, activities that foster learning, measured progress, and data-informed changes. A team of UASC members read and used a four-point rubric to evaluate each submission. One was the lowest rating, four was the highest.

Across the institution we are strongest at setting goals, fostering learning activities, and using multiple approaches to assess student learning. We have opportunities to grow in establishing learning outcomes and using data to inform improvements to student learning.

The UASC has provided feedback to each of the units who submitted material and provided division-wide reports to the Vice Presidents over Diversity and Inclusion, Student Affairs, and Academic Affairs. To continue to engage in the assessment process, the UASC will use these results to offer broad-based professional development on data-informed decision-making, and targeted professional development to programs and colleges.

### ***UNIVERSITY-WIDE ASSESSMENT DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES***

The UASC assisted with preparing two assessment professional development opportunities: The Assessment in Action Conference and Assessment for Administrators and Learner Support Units workshops.

- **Assessment in Action Conference.** The 11<sup>th</sup> Annual WMU Assessment in Action Conference, which was scheduled for March 13, 2020, was canceled due to the pandemic. There were more than 100 administrators, faculty, graduate students, and staff scheduled to attend the conference, which at the time due to safety guidelines was too many people to meet in one space. Registered attendees included those from WMU and some individuals from Kalamazoo

College, Kalamazoo Valley Community College, Kellogg Community College, Rhodes State College and WMU Cooley Law School. Dr. Megan Good, (Director of Quality and Improvement at Auburn University), and Dr. Vicki Wise, (Director of Assessment and Accreditation at Oregon State University), were scheduled to present an opening assessment question and answer session as well as several concurrent breakout sessions. We were disappointed that a few days prior to the conference we had to make the decision to cancel, but it was the wise and safe decision based on the situation. Both Drs. Good and Wise have graciously allowed us access to utilize their presentation materials and it is hoped that we will share those with the campus community during the upcoming academic year in some fashion, while of course following all safety guidelines and protocols.

- **Assessment for Administrators and Learner Support Units.** These workshops were scheduled for May 12 and 13 but were also canceled due to the pandemic. Lindsey Guinn, (Director of Assessment and Institutional Research/Accreditation Liaison Officer, Washington & Jefferson College), was scheduled to come and share a workshop for administrators during the May Academic Forum meeting and then the following day, to share a workshop focused on assessment for learner support units. In early April, we determined that the situation with the pandemic was not changing, so we canceled the visit and workshops. We hope to invite Ms. Guinn back to campus later and/or will consider the possibility of asking her to share similar workshops virtually. This will be a topic of discussion for the UASC in the coming months.

### ***ASSESSMENT FELLOWS***

Each year, the UASC awards fellowship grants to WMU faculty and staff for research on assessment that advances student learning and program quality. The 2019-2020 fellows were:

- Andrea Bau (College of Education and Human Development, Admissions and Advising) and Steve Booher (Office of Student Transitions)
- Allison Grime (WMU Signature) and Evan Heiser (WMU Signature)
- Yvonne Jackson (Physical Therapy Department) and Debra Lindstrom (Occupational Therapy Department)
- Kelly Reed (WMU Signature and Invisible Need Project) and Josh Conley (Invisible Need Project)
- Ewa Urban (Career and Student Employment) and Wayne Bond (Career and Student Employment)
- Bridget Weller (School of Social Work)

For the 2019-20 year, a total of \$20,000 was awarded. Posters summarizing the work on these projects can be found here: [https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/assessment\\_faculty\\_grant/](https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/assessment_faculty_grant/)

Due to the pandemic and economic uncertainties, we were not able to send out a request for applications for the grants for the 2020-21 academic year. We are hopeful that there might be funding available for some smaller scale grants. The UASC plans to explore options, including the possibility of restructuring the grant guidelines for the 2020-21 academic year. Further discussion will take place as the committee resumes its work in the fall 2020.

### ***HLC PREPARATION***

In preparation for the HLC reaffirmation of accreditation visit in April 2021, the UASC continued its collaboration with the Office of Institutional Effectiveness. Several members of the UASC are involved

with different aspects of the preparation for the upcoming visit, in particular assisting with writing the assurance argument for Criterion 4, which focuses on Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement.

Additionally, the annual assessment reports previously mentioned helped the University in the reporting of our assessment efforts.

### ***WMU ESSENTIAL STUDIES***

Members of the UASC helped facilitate sessions on assessment in support of the Faculty Senate's WMU Essential Studies Executive Advisory Committee's workshops on the design, development, assessment, and submission of courses for consideration for the new WMU Essential Studies program. Duke and Reinhold served on the Executive Advisory Committee.

### ***UASC GUIDELINES REVISION***

Every five years, the UASC reviews committee guidelines and policies for potential revisions. A subcommittee convened at the beginning of 2020 and worked to identify and recommend additions and revisions to the current guidelines, which will expire at the end of 2020. Subcommittee work was put on hold due to the pandemic, but will continue through the fall semester 2020 with the intent of a final recommendation and vote on any updates and changes by all committee members completed by late fall.

### ***COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP AND LEADERS***

Each of the colleges, including the Graduate College and the Lee Honors College, have at least one representative on the UASC. Other members include members of the academic advising leadership, Student Affairs, Office of Faculty Development, Institutional Effectiveness, Haenicke Institute for Global Engagement, University Libraries, Undergraduate Studies Council, Graduate Studies Council and from the Office of Assessment and Undergraduate Studies.

For the 2019-20 year, Megan Slayter served as chair (Department of Dance) and Ciji Heiser (Student Affairs) served as vice chair.

For the 2020-21 year, Heiser will serve as chair and we are currently in the process of nominating and appointing a vice chair. This is normally done during the end of the spring semester, but due to the pandemic was put on hold until the group could reconvene.

As shown by this report, the UASC continues to actively work to support and advance the culture of assessment at WMU through professional development learning opportunities, giving feedback to programs/departments on assessment efforts, and providing funding for assessment efforts. Though this work will change due to funding and the ongoing uncertainty, the committee remains dedicated and focused on supporting institutional assessment work in 2020-2021. Your comments, suggestions, and questions are appreciated as we head into the 2020-21 academic year. Thank you for your support of our work.

C: UASC