

Annual Report of the University Assessment Panel 2020-21

The specific responsibilities of the University Assessment Panel (UAP) include reviewing the university mission statement, the IBHE focus statement for Northern Illinois University, and goals of the IBHE *Public Agenda* as a context for assessment; coordinating assessment activities at the undergraduate and graduate levels and in academic support areas; promoting campus-wide assessment activities to improve learning; supporting departments in preparing the assessment component of discipline-specific accreditation reviews; helping position the university for reaccreditation by the Higher Learning Commission; and reviewing department assessment activities in conjunction with program review.

The panel met 12 times during the academic year, beginning on September 16, 2020 and ending on April 16, 2021. The panel reviewed the assessment plans and status reports of 19 academic programs and three academic support units.

The programs in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences for review in 2020-2021 were the:

- B.S. in Biological Sciences
- M.S. in Biological Sciences
- Ph.D. in Biological Sciences
- B.S. in Physics
- M.S. in Physics
- Ph.D. in Physics

The programs in the College of Engineering and Engineering Technology for review in 2020-2021 were the:

- B.S. in Industrial and Systems Engineering
- M.S. in Industrial and Systems Engineering
- B.S. in Mechatronics Engineering
- B.S. in Mechanical Engineering
- M.S. in Mechanical Engineering
- B.S. in Electrical Engineering
- B.S. in Biomedical Engineering
- B.S. in Engineering Technology
- M.S. in Industrial Management and Technology

The programs in the College of Health and Human Sciences for review in 2020-2021 were the:

- Doctor of Physical Therapy
- B.S. in Rehabilitation and Disability Services
- M.S. in Rehabilitation Counseling
- Medical Laboratory Sciences (B.S.)

The academic support units for review in 2020-2021 were the:

- University Honors
- University Libraries
- University Office of Educator Licensure and Preparation

One academic program (M.S. in Electrical Engineering) and one academic support unit (Division of International Affairs) were given an extension to submit their status reports in AY 2021-2022.

Other Activities

All meetings were conducted remotely during this past year. Several members were new to the UAP and the initial meetings during the fall 2020 semester were used to comprehensively review assessment concepts and practices and facilitate discussions about programmatic assessment of student learning outcomes. In October, the UAP invited Dr. Kendall Thu, President of Faculty Senate and Executive Secretary of University Council to discuss the proposed review of assessment processes at NIU, with an eye towards minimizing the reporting burden on programs and promoting meaningful faculty-led assessment activity while also assuring compliance with regional accreditation standards. Regular updates on the work of the assessment task force were provided to the UAP through the year with the final report of the task force presented to the UAP members on April 16, 2021. Based on UAP discussions and suggestions from members about expanding the work on assessment, AAE hosted a Wisdom Wednesday Panel session, *"Inquiry into effective teaching and learning using assessment"* The panel was composed of five faculty from four colleges- Sarah Marsh (College of Business), Beth Moxley and Amanda McCarthy (College of Health and Human Sciences), John Evar Strid (College of Education), and Alicia Schatteman (College of Liberal Arts and Sciences). AAE is working to address suggestions from the UAP to create more outreach on assessment through their website.

Another area of focus for the UAP was the continued discussions on equity in assessment framework and practices. Members voted to amend the UAP bylaws to form a permanent "Equity in Assessment" sub-committee of the UAP. A proposal was submitted for the first read during the April 2 meeting, followed by a final vote during the April 16 meeting.

Finally, the panel was involved in reviewing two additional university-wide initiatives. The first was NIU's Quality Initiative proposal on improving student success and reducing equity gaps in gateway courses. This project entitled, *"Success in Gateway Courses for All Students"* was accepted by the Higher Learning Commission in January, 2021. A second initiative is the General Education Program assessment plan. Status updates provided to the UAP indicate that the GEC has made progress in identifying and operationalizing the student learning outcomes of the General Education Program. The assessment plan will be finalized by fall 2021.

Overall, this year the UAP was involved in various discussions and activities that have supported campus-wide assessment efforts to improve student learning.

Respectfully submitted,



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Vice Provost for Institutional Effectiveness