
The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational achievement and improvement through ongoing assessment of student learning.

1. The institution has clearly stated goals for student learning and effective processes for assessment of student learning and achievement of learning goals.
2. The institution assesses achievement of the learning outcomes that it claims for its curricular and co-curricular programs.
3. The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.
4. The institution’s processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including the substantial participation of faculty and other instructional staff members.

Argument

CWRU’s commitment to the educational achievements of its students and outcome assessment is demonstrated on multiple levels.

1. As evidence that CWRU recognizes the importance of outcome assessment in the education process, the university established and filled (in April 2012) the position of University Director of Outcome Assessment (UDOA), which reports through the Office of the Provost. The UDOA is an assessment resource for the academic departments and faculty across the university, and helps faculty members to improve assessment practices and ultimately the learning experiences of students. In addition, this office is responsible to ensure that internal and external expectations for the assessment of student learning are met. In addition to having a university-wide framework for outcome assessment, the university preserves the ability of each individual school to determine the student learning outcomes of importance to its degree programs, and the best methods by which to assess them. Thus, each school has established its own committee or office that is responsible for ensuring that proper outcome assessment is taking place. Examples of assessment practices from the School of Medicine and the School of Dental Medicine are provided here. The UDOA convenes the Outcome Assessment Coordinating Committee, which includes a faculty representative or dean from each of the schools. This committee meets regularly to discuss ongoing assessment activities and planning as well as to share ideas and best practices.

Student learning outcomes and assessment plans for all degree programs are housed within a central assessment website, which serves as a workspace and discussion area for the UDOA, the Dean of Graduate Studies, the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education, the Office of Institutional Research, members of the university Outcome Assessment Coordinating Committee and the assessment liaisons for the individual degree programs. Once finalized, student learning outcome statements for degree programs are published and available to the campus community via the Resources page of the Outcome Assessment website. The assessment of learning is linked to other academic processes in the programs, such as the program reviews and evaluations mandated by school bylaws (see the example from the School of Nursing) or the Ohio Board of Regents (see the example assessment plan by the College of Arts and Sciences) or by specialized accreditation (see the plan developed by the School of Engineering relative to ABET accreditation) to ensure continuous improvement. The assessment plan for the School of Medicine provides a further example.

2. Institutional assessment occurs in the form of surveys, focus groups, and the analysis of
institutional data. An ongoing cycle of institutional participation in national surveys provides an indirect measure of student learning (see CWRU Senior Survey results and College Senior Survey results), engagement, academic experiences and satisfaction both inside and outside of the classroom. Trends over time and group differences are examined on a regular basis. The results are analyzed by Institutional Research and regularly shared or discussed with the campus community via committee and council meetings, discussions with the administrative leadership of the schools, the university website, and social media sites (see CWRU sites on Twitter and Facebook, for example).

Learning occurring within courses and other components of the various degree programs is regularly assessed. All academic units have learning outcomes and assessment plans developed by the faculty for their degree programs. (For examples, see the listing of program outcomes and assessment plans extracted from the main assessment website.) The assessment plan for the learning outcomes of the SAGES general education program details the expected progression in performance and skills of undergraduate students. Components of general education are also assessed through the SAGES writing portfolio requirement.

Learning activities that occur outside of the classroom are also assessed by various units on campus. The Student Affairs division recently expanded its ability to perform outcome assessment across its various departments by creating (and filling) a Director of Student Affairs Assessment position to lead such activities. In addition to the divisional assessment activities, the Division of Student Affairs and Institutional Research work together to analyze institutional data on the impact of co-curricular programs and to share this information across campus. Students are provided with an online portal to track their participation in student organizations and other co-curricular experiences, which can be linked to learning outcomes and related assessments of those outcomes.

The Kelvin Smith Library has robust assessment practices and is pursuing plans to expand and integrate assessment of library service and their impact on students, particularly in such areas as information literacy. Recruitment for the newly created position of Assessment Officer for the Library, who will oversee the Library's assessment team, is currently underway. The Center for International Affairs surveys students who have participated in various study abroad experiences about their learning to continuously improve the programs. To bolster this assessment effort, CWRU's spring 2015 administration of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) will include an optional topical module based on the Global Perspective Inventory (GPI).

3. CWRU routinely uses information gained from assessment at various levels to improve student learning. At the institutional level, each year the SAGES Writing Portfolio Review Committee (comprised of faculty members from across the undergraduate schools) reads the writing portfolios submitted as part of the degree requirements for all CWRU undergraduates. The report to the directors of the SAGES program and the Director of Composition provides recommendations for general education based on assessment of undergraduate writing proficiency. The report is also disseminated to the whole campus by posting on the university website. UCITE also conducts events around the results of the evaluation of the writing portfolio.

Analyses conducted by Institutional Research of university surveys inform planning and program improvement. Recently, this office started providing reports to undergraduate advisors based on student responses to the Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement about new students' expectations for learning. Results of student surveys, such as the NSSE and Senior Survey, are analyzed and reported at both the institutional level and by individual schools. At the program level, assessment data are routinely used to improve the curriculum and student learning experience. Examples are provided here for the BS programs in Management, program improvements in the Doctor of Nursing Practice program (see Key element IV-D starting at the bottom of the page),
modifications in the medical school curriculum that have taken place in 2010 and 2013, and revisions made to the advanced level programs within the Weatherhead School of Management.

4. The UDOA reports annually to the Faculty Senate about assessment activities and solicits their feedback. (See the example presentation delivered at the March 31, 2014 Faculty Senate meeting.) The Outcome Assessment Coordinating Committee meets regularly to share information, strategies, and best practices among the schools. A brief best practices document was developed by the UDOA at the request of the faculty and distributed in meetings and via the Resources section of the assessment website. Additional key information about outcome assessment practice is available on this page. Members of the Outcome Assessment Coordinating Committee bring back reports and information to their units that are then used within the schools for improvement of assessment. Programs promote best practices within their units, such as guidelines for inclusion of learning outcomes in syllabi, strategies for continuous improvement and broad participation of faculty members. For example, guidance about curricular design for improving writing instruction (developed on the basis of results from the writing portfolio assessment) is available on the Writing Program's website. The SAGES Portfolio Review Committee involves faculty members from a variety of academic departments in the assessment of undergraduate writing and critical thinking.

The UDOA collaborates with the University Center for Innovation in Teaching and Education (UCITE) in providing faculty development opportunities around outcome assessment. Such sessions, which are open to all faculty members, occur on a regular basis. The UDOA also provides workshops to any department or program that requests them. For example, the UDOA and an Associate Dean for the College of Arts and Sciences recently conducted workshops with faculty representatives from all academic departments within the College about best practices in assessment. Feedback was subsequently provided by the UDOA to each department on learning outcomes and assessment plans as they were developed or refined as part of this process. Similarly, the School of Law recently held a workshop on assessment for its faculty members.

Various events and programs on campus engage faculty members in discussing and sharing best practices in assessment. For example, the UCITE Mentor Fellows program is using a text that provides a research-based approach to the assessment of dissertations in PhD programs. The Weatherhead School of Management conducted an Assurance of Learning workshop for all faculty members and program managers within the school, to promote collaboration on assessment and to share what is working well. The library hosted the first national Personal Librarian and First Year Experience Library Conference, which included an assessment track to share best practices. (See the sessions described on pages 15, 19, 22, 25, and 28 of the conference booklet.)

Technology is used when appropriate to promote efficiency and sustainability in assessment. A shared rubric archive has been created within the university's learning management system (Blackboard) to provide faculty members with the ability to import and modify rubrics for their own courses as well as to share their rubrics with others. The AAC&U (Association of American Colleges and Universities) VALUE (Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education) rubrics are included in the site, which were developed by teams of faculty experts representing colleges and universities across the United States. In a collaboration between Information Technology Services and the Provost’s Office, digital technology tools to facilitate data collection and analysis for assessment purposes are being explored.
Sources

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