

I. Introduction

North Dakota State University (NDSU) is a student-focused, land-grant, research university whose core values emphasize the importance of teaching and learning and accountability to the people of North Dakota. Teaching and learning within the university is carried out through eight colleges that offer a wide range of academic programs that result in certification, bachelor's, master's, specialist, and doctoral degrees as well as through Student Affairs and the Extension Service. Goals for learning are established at every level of the university by programs themselves and/or external agencies that reflect important learning outcomes for undergraduate, graduate, and Extension Service programs.

To ensure that NDSU demonstrates its commitment to the core value of accountability, assessment of learning goals is conducted at the various levels in the university (program, college, and institutional). This process is guided by the University Assessment Committee. The University Assessment Committee (UAC) was created in 1992 through the Office of Assessment and Institutional Research at North Dakota State University. All departments and units on campus were asked to submit annual assessment reports for the following year, 1993-1994. To strengthen the assessment initiative, the UAC developed a campus-wide strategic plan in 1995 to serve as a guide for preparing assessment reports.

Due to the current trends in higher education that emphasize the importance of a comprehensive assessment of learning outcomes, the University Assessment Committee is committed to supporting and consistently revising an inclusive, strategic assessment plan that fits with North Dakota State University's mission as a land grant institution. In order to accomplish this, the plan must address the role of Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, and the Extension Service.

This campus-wide strategic assessment plan serves as a framework within which faculty and staff from Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, and the Extension Service identify learning outcomes, design appropriate assessments to measure learning, analyze the results, and then use results to make changes to improve learning. That information can then be used to demonstrate to multiple audiences the university's willingness to fulfill its obligation to accountability and its commitment to teaching and learning.

II. Goals

- Nurture a campus culture in which all appropriate units systematically gather evidence to document learning and/or development and use that evidence to continually improve learning and/or development.
 - Promote campus-wide systems to assess student learning
- Use annual assessment reports as an opportunity to engage in ongoing conversations about the learning and/or development that units are promoting.
 - Provide consistent and timely feedback to units about annual assessment reports.
 - Solicit regular feedback from units about the assessment process.

- Promote campus-wide dialogues about how assessment methods can be employed to improve learning and/or development.
 - Promote professional development on assessment.
- Provide information to external audiences to document assessment practices and improvements based on those practices.

III. Implementation of Goals

Academic Affairs

The Provost provides administrative leadership for all academic activities, by promoting, supporting, and sustaining excellence in teaching, research, creative activity, and service in academic units. The Provost is responsible for guiding the University's instructional curriculum, which includes undergraduate, graduate, and distance education. The UAC reports to the Faculty Senate and the Provost.

The UAC distributes its guidelines to and shares its feedback on assessment reports with department chairs or heads. Department chairs and heads are responsible for engaging all their instructional faculty in conducting regular assessment and completing the annual UAC report. Instructional faculty identify and communicate student learning outcomes to their students and analyze how those outcomes for their program are aligned with the university learning outcomes and with outcomes in individual classes in their program. Program assessment plans identify where student learning occurs in the curriculum, how and how often it is assessed, and how the program uses those results to improve student learning.

Student Affairs

The Division of Student Affairs embraces the mission of the university by providing services, programs, and resources to students to support academic, professional, and personal growth. Included in the philosophical foundation central to the Division's mission is the commitment to student engagement and a transformative learning environment. The Division embraces a learning agenda framework for its work with students.

Assessment in the Division of Student Affairs is guided by the Student Affairs Assessment Committee and the Office of Student Affairs Assessment. Each department (or the major activities from each department, as approved by the Student Affairs Assessment Committee and the Director of Student Affairs Assessment), submits an annual report to the Director of Student Affairs Assessment.

Results from assessment will be shared with a variety of stakeholders. Internally, results will be discussed and used within each department and by the leadership of the Division to inform changes and improvements. Externally, results will be shared and communicated to show how the Division is meeting expected goals, making changes to improve the achievement of those goals, and being good stewards of the provided resources.

Extension Service

Established in 1914, the Extension Service exists to serve the educational needs of North Dakotans and addresses identified needs through education in four program areas: Agriculture and Natural Resources, Family and Consumer Sciences, Community Vitality and 4-H Youth Development. These four programs

deliver educational opportunities throughout the state with 10 program planning teams. Teams may change as needs emerge, and teams are responsible for creating educational programs and evaluation tools to assess the impact.

Program development/assessment is an ongoing systematic process that NDSU extension professionals follow as they plan, implement, and evaluate their educational programs. Extension agents and specialists, in collaboration with their leaders and teams, identify learning goals and expected outcomes for their audiences. Based on the assessment processes, agents and specialists create annual impact reports. Impact reports are broadly shared, and summary reports are prepared for stakeholders at the state and federal levels.

IV. Responsibilities of the University Assessment Committee (UAC)

The purpose of the University Assessment Committee (UAC) is to apply a continuous quality improvement process to the assessment of student learning in both undergraduate and graduate programs at NDSU, to the array of extracurricular activities conducted in Student Affairs, and learning opportunities presented by the NDSU Extension Service to diverse clientele. The Bylaws of the Faculty Senate of NDSU define the UAC membership as a Joint Standing Committee (<http://www.ndsu.edu/fileadmin/facultysenate/docs/bylaws.pdf>) and describe committee responsibilities. Those are:

1. Annually reviewing the assessment of student learning in the university's undergraduate and graduate programs, within the units of the Division of Student Affairs and in the NDSU Extension Service.
2. Developing procedures for the annual reporting of assessment activities by departments and other academic units, units in the Division of Student Affairs, and the NDSU Extension Service on their assessment activities.
3. Providing feedback and assistance to departments and other academic units on their assessment activities.
4. Providing a yearly summary of assessment activities to the Faculty Senate, the Provost, the Vice President for Agriculture and University Extension, and the Director of the NDSU Extension Service.

V. Annual Planning Process

At their first meeting of each academic year, UAC members will: 1) review feedback about the assessment process received from units; 2) review the strengths and weakness of the review process employed in the previous year; 3) review patterns of strengths and weaknesses in reports reviewed in the previous year; and 4) based on the previous three items, develop an action plan for the coming academic year.