

2015-16 Assessment Report Summary

Objectives for Campus-Wide Assessment

There are several benefits to requiring each department and program to develop and conduct comprehensive assessments. This includes:

- Enables each department to better understand the extent the area is achieving its mission
- Helps to promote culture of improvement
- Justifies department resources and costs
- Demonstrates the academic and co-curricular quality of a Siena education to prospective and current students, senior leadership, and potential employers
- Stipulated in the reaccreditation process, the College is building evidence that resources are being allocated and used to enable college level student learning and experiences that are rigorous and extensive

Changes in Submissions for 2015-16

In 2015-16, an online submission of the Assessment Plan and Report (APR) form was available. Although not required, most departments submitted their Assessment Reports online. On the online form, definitions and brief descriptions of each assessment report element were available next to the text entry box, radio button, or check box. The online form has the added benefit of sharing drafts with other faculty members and providing feedback before the final version is sent to the Deans and the VPAA. The latter will be fully operational in 2016-17 with the school assessment coordinators and AVPAA able to provide comments and corresponding changes made before the report is submitted. Moreover, this should improve not only the documentation but also the assessment that is being conducted.

Nonetheless, the information requested on the form has changed little in the past five years enabling the faculty and the Student Learning Assessment Committee (SLAC) to track the progress of student learning results as well as changes and improvement in assessment methodologies.

Compliance

APRs were submitted for all but 14 eligible academic programs. Programs approved by the BOI in 2015-16 were not required to submit an APR (although they are required to submit program student learning outcomes- SLOs). In addition, programs that were successfully accredited (SWRK) in 2015-16 were also not required to submit and APR.

As seen below and to the right, the number of programs that were not compliant increased from 2014-15 albeit less than 2013-14. The increase from 2014-15 may be attributable to a couple of factors.

- Two programs (1 minor, 1 certificate) that are designated as non-compliant completed an online Assessment Report as a draft but have yet to submit the final version.
- There has been a steady increase in the number of minors in the past two years. Many of the new minors do not have enough students yet to derive meaningful assessment results. Hence, many of these coordinators have opted not to submit an assessment report although it is required.
- The self-study for Middle States was submitted in Spring 2014 with a Monitoring Report due in Spring 2016. Academic departments may have been more attentive last year in light of the institution's increased accreditation efforts. Unfortunately, that urgency did not carry forward in the present year.

Did NOT Submit	Majors	Minors & Certs.
2011-12	7	27
2012-13	2	9
2013-14	2	16
2014-15	0	0
2015-16	2	11

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Two majors did not submit assessment reports (Student Designed Interdisciplinary Major, MS in Accounting). Regardless, compliance has improved significantly in the last five years.

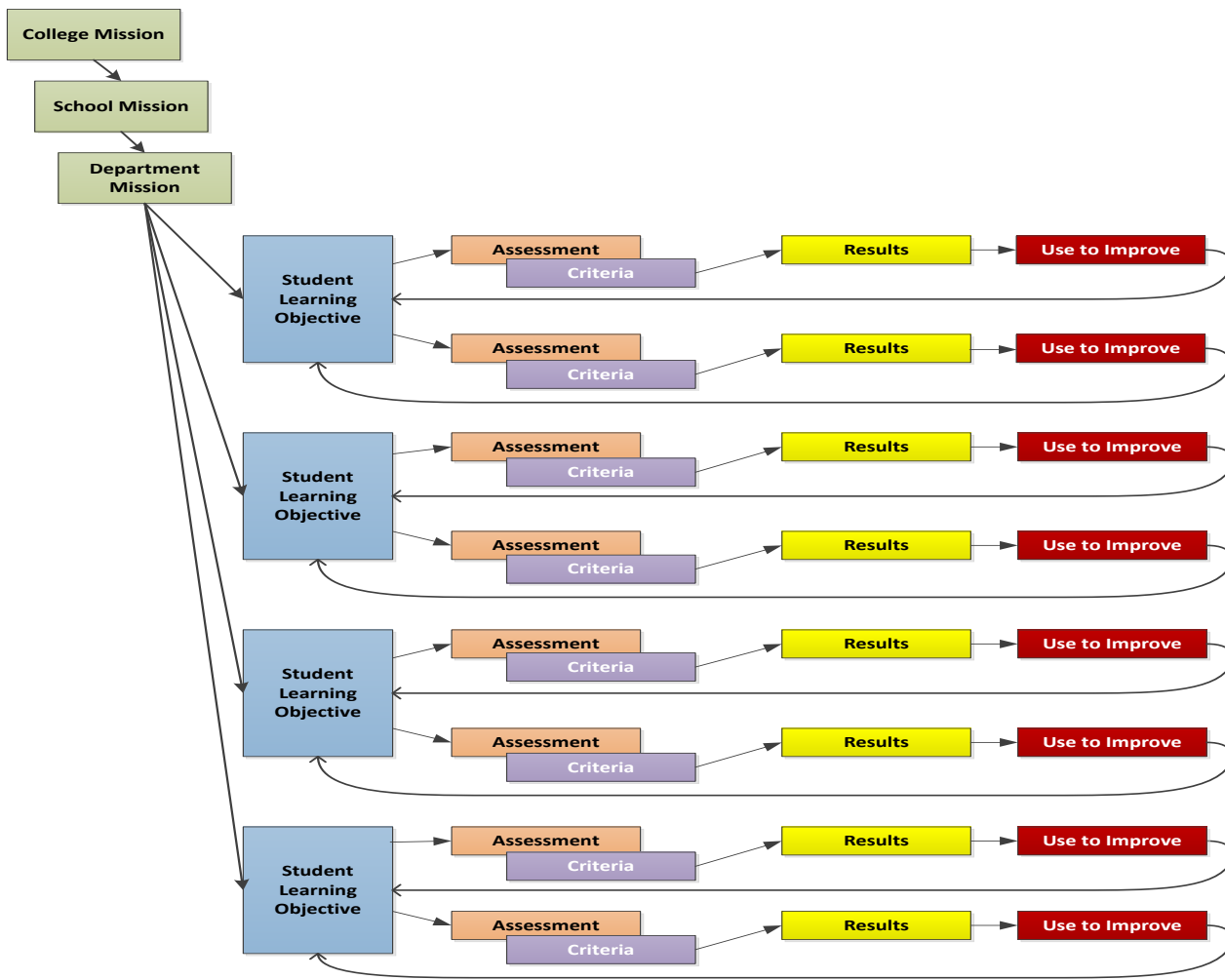
Although feedback to the departments has always been provided, in 2014-15 an assessment report rubric was developed to assure feedback is appropriate and useful. Designed by SLAC and specifically the school assessment coordinators, SLAC “guarantees” to provide comments to each department by early Fall 2016. Also new in 2015-16 was the development of a systematic process to use this rubric. That process was both collegial and efficient.

Observations

Process

As illustrated below, assessment is a multi-staged process consisting of the following:

1. Defining department or program objectives
2. Developing and conducting assessments that correspond to the objectives
3. Setting criteria that can be discerned to determine if objective met or exceeded
4. Reporting results that connect the objectives with the assessment
5. Explicitly stating how the results will be used to improve the department or program



Observations about quality and challenges of the 2015-16 assessment reports are discussed within the context of the above process.

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Quality

Compared to 2014-15

- All programs now have articulated SLOs and those SLOs focus on student learning
- The level of expectations as indicated in the SLO criteria has increased from 2014-2015
- No department is using satisfaction surveys exclusively to measure student learning (However, Pre-Law certificate is still using surveys to ascertain the level of learning for some SLOs)
- Some departments are utilizing multiple assessments for at least one SLO
- Almost all departments are reporting that assessments are being used to revise course content, pedagogy, and assignments
- SLO criteria are focused on student learning and link to the assessment
- Most majors have completed at least one assessment cycle for all program SLOs. As a result, the assessment and use of results of these programs have improved.
- The SLO and assessments of the minors have improved greatly. This may be a result of curricular revisions such as additional required courses and decreasing the number of electives. In turn, many of the minor programs more structured and less confusing.

Areas for Improvement

- **Program SLOs**
 - In some programs, SLOs are unclear or not stated as expectations of student learning (e.g. Economics major/minor: #1 conceptual framework, #2 policy analysis, # 3 inquiry; Creative Arts: #3 portfolio, Student Learning Outcomes stated as questions for International Studies minor; Biology minor “know the facts...”)
 - SLOs for major programs are identical to the minor (e.g. Economics, Philosophy, Sociology- what was submitted)
 - SLOs between majors are identical (e.g. Chemistry/Bio-Chemistry, BA Biology/BS Biology, BA Mathematics/BS Mathematics/ Mathematics minor- same assessment results for all three Mathematics programs as well)
 - Some minors only included one or two SLOs (e.g. Broadcast & Society, Criminal Justice had 1, English major submitted 1, 2 objectives submitted for the English minor; Religious Studies indicated 1 SLO for both major and minor)
 - Furthermore, the learning objectives were vague and not specific or unique to the program (e.g. History: “earn passing grades on required assignments”)
 - Some SLOs are not very challenging (e.g. Participate, Understand,)
- **Assessment Cycle**
 - Some programs especially minors are still in the planning phase. Some of these “just in the planning phase” minors are established minors with an adequate number of students to conduct assessments.
 - Few departments are able to document if changes made due to assessment improved student learning (Three exceptions were Chemistry major, Political Science major, and Spanish major)
- **Assessments**
 - A few majors have only two SLOs (e.g. Management- minor has 5 outcomes)
 - Identified assessments are ambiguous, too numerous, and often without corresponding reporting of assessment results
 - Assessments for major and minor are identical (e.g. Philosophy, BA Mathematics/BS Mathematics/ Mathematics minor)
- **Criteria**
 - Criteria are not stated for all SLOs (e.g. Economics major & minor, Management submitted 1, Sociology submitted 1)
 - Criteria, SLOs, and assessments for some minors are the same as the major (Chemistry/Bio-Chemistry, BA Biology/BS Biology, BA Mathematics/BS Mathematics/ Mathematics minor)

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- Criteria are not specific, often stated as “meeting standards” or “meet expectations” (e.g. Philosophy major/minor, Marketing major, Human Resource Development minor)
- **Documentation**
 - Only one report was submitted for two programs although in some cases the programs are fairly disparate (e.g. Actuarial Science/Risk Management, BS Accounting/Certificate, BS Biology/BA Biology, BA Environmental Studies/BS Environmental Science)

Recognitions

- SoB
 - Although all SLOs met or exceeded the stated criteria, *Economic major* has still identified areas for improvement
 - Results for *Finance majors* are reported at an appropriate level of detail to help guide future direction for the program.
 - *Business minor* incorporated several courses into the assessment of the program
 - All business majors incorporate general skills such as leadership, teamwork, and ethics in the context of the discipline
- SoLA
 - *Multicultural minor* faculty reflected on the assessment results and identified some explicit changes to improve student learning. Likewise, *Political Science major* faculty will make some curricular changes next year
 - *History major* set criteria at 90%
 - The SLOs identified for the *Creative Arts major* are specific, distinctive, and align with discipline expectations
 - *Educational Studies* minor folds general skills such as communication in the context of the program’s content
- SoS
 - The *Biochemistry major* were very candid in reporting assessment results (e.g. the textbook may not have been as helpful in improving ACS exam scores)
 - That said, most ACS test scores for *Bio-Chemistry* and *Chemistry majors* exceed ACS national averages
 - *Computer Science major* has reported assessment results for both majors and non-majors for some of their course embedded assessments
 - SLOs in *Physics major* are very well articulated and represent both lower and higher level processes (e.g. understand, analyze, problem solving)

Recommendations

- **Recognition**
 - Consider **linking** the quality of assessment reports to other institutional evaluations (e.g. resource allocation, Austen Report, strategic plan contributions, etc.)
 - **Recognize** exceptional assessment efforts and contributions on par with existing service, teaching, and research awards
 - Provide **incentives** to departments that set targets/criteria that challenge the status-quo
 - Continue to work toward engendering a **campus culture** of assessment. Support of academic leadership is key to this endeavor. Visibility and acknowledging assessment’s relevance in the context of academic excellence is also important.
 - Emphasize the **benefits** of articulating SLOs and conducting assessment. Not only is it a valuable tool to help improve student learning it also enhances the:
 - understanding of the program to internal and external audiences
 - alignment of the program to Siena’s mission
 - marketability to students

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- **Training**
 - Afford faculty opportunities to pair **assessment** and **pedagogy research** with discipline specific scholarship activities
 - Offer additional **workshops** on the development of SLOs, assessment techniques, and use of results. Imperative will be the integration of these trainings with faculty development on pedagogy and curriculum development
 - Through the collaborative efforts of the Council for Teaching and Learning (CTL), make assessment topics a regularly featured faculty development opportunity
 - Consider partial funding for travel opportunities to regional and national **assessment conferences**
 - Continue to work with ITS and the departments to improve the **online reporting system**. Provide training early next spring to reduce some of the frustration of submitting online

- **Support**
 - Provide support and recognition to the **school assessment coordinators**. They are key to helping departments conduct good assessment and therefore, improving student learning
 - Continue to work with departments to improve their current assessments and help identify new appropriate and **innovative assessment** strategies
 - Develop and implement a competitive **assessment grant program**
 - Assist departments “tease” out students enrolled in different programs that are undergoing the same assessment and evaluate their progress separately. This is common because of the ubiquitous use of “course-embedded assessments” (e.g. Actuarial Science/Risk Management, BS Accounting/Certificate, BS Biology/BA Biology, Computer Science major/minor/ certificate, BA Mathematics/BS Mathematics/ Mathematics minor).
 - Make assessment a necessary component of a campus-wide adoption of **e-portfolios**. This year, several programs mentioned in their assessment reports the use or potential use of e-portfolios to showcase student work.
 - Meet with department heads to listen to concerns and suggestions for support

- **SLOs**
 - Require that all programs have a **distinct set of SLOs**. Programs that “share” goals do a disservice to the value of a Siena education. They are indistinguishable from other programs and are difficult for students, parents, employers, and other stakeholders to comprehend and appreciate their worth
 - Ascertain of the current use and long-term role of the **Siena College Goals**. Few programs or departments address the **Siena College Goals** and there is no systematic mapping of program SLOs to either school or the Siena College Goals. That said, SoLA and SoS are reviewing the current alignment of school goals to the Siena College goals.

Summary

In brief, much progress has been made in both assessment, student learning, and the documentation of student learning. Nonetheless, several areas regarding assessment need to be addressed.

Recognizing that assessment in of itself is also a work in progress, continued commitment and attention to assessment will improve the quality of education. That dedication has to remain palpable into the very fabric of student and faculty life but especially as it pertains to teaching, scholarship, and development. The priority, therefore, is to maintain the level of enthusiasm and to continue to demonstrate the value of assessment.