College or Unit Level Annual Assessment Report

College or Unit Name
College of Arts and Sciences (CAS)
College of Arts and Sciences Assessment Committee (CASAC)

Report Year
2013-14

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SECTION I
Summary of Overall Achievement in Assessing Student Learning

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Summary of Goals and Achievement in Assessment
The 2013-14 school year represents the second year that CASAC has coordinated with the University Assessment Committee, the CAS Dean's office, department heads of the eighteen CAS departments and one CAS program, and representative faculty of the 133 degree programs to create a system to evaluate student learning from diverse, programmatic perspectives. CASAC's mission statement (see below) is aligned with EMU's mission statement on assessment of student learning (http://www.emich.edu/assessment/) and provides a foundation for three main objectives of the faculty-led committee: (1) design an assessment system to demonstrate that programs are evaluating student learning from programmatic perspectives and 'closing the loop' (i.e., making improvements based on data); (2) contribute to the university's Higher Learning Commission (HLC) accreditation process and report; (3) coordinate perpetual efforts of evaluating student learning across the college and articulate with stakeholders who are engaged with similar efforts (e.g., General Education program and specialized accredited programs).

CASAC MISSION STATEMENT
In collaboration with the EMU University Assessment Committee, CAS Dean's office and CAC, CASAC is faculty-led and focused on assisting administrators, faculty and programs in building systems to evaluate student learning from programmatic perspectives.

In order to accomplish these objectives, CASAC created a document of responsibilities, which it continued to enact and shape this past year through biweekly committee meetings (September through April) and discussions with faculty, staff and administrators across the college and university. The four main responsibilities include:
- Planning and coordinating programmatic assessment of student learning and reporting system, including humane and doable timelines and practices
- Communicating with stakeholders and creating links with institutions that inform policies and practices (e.g., HLC)
- Building capacity (in order to improve the culture of assessment)
- Supporting programs, administrators and faculty

Goals for 2013-14. The key goals for the second year included increasing, or at least maintaining, the percentage of programs participating in programmatic assessment of student learning (there was an 8% percent increase from the previous year), enhancing communication among CASAC and the departments and programs, and guiding programs to strengthen the overall quality of the plans and reports. All of these goals were accomplished, and CASAC continues to construct a vision for a systematic approach of assessing student learning in a large, complex college. Since "one size" *does not* fit all, CASAC is working with programs to design assessments that conceptually make sense to program faculty in order to provide data used to 'close the loop' (i.e., to make informed decisions that enhance opportunities for students to learn) and to communicate findings to stakeholders.

Goals in Ongoing Efforts to Assess Student Learning & Role of Faculty and Staff in the Assessment Process and How Analysis of Data Led to Representative Changes
In order to continue designing a college-wide system for assessing student learning from programmatic perspectives, CASAC continued to encourage faculty to create humane and doable systems, ones that fit program and student needs; and CASAC responded to 100% of submitted program assessment plans and reports in order to support faculty and to generate consistency of a budding college evaluation system. CASAC worked to enhance communication, particularly with department heads and program faculty (e.g., two members of CASAC met individually with all DHs in June 2014), and to build capacity within the committee and across departments and programs.

Achievements
Assessment Reports for 2012-13. In Winter 2013, CASAC received assessment plans from nearly 80% of degree programs (see Appendix, Table 1). Of those programs, 62% of them submitted reports in September 2013, describing how the programs enacted or reshaped the plans; at least two members from CASAC responded to each of the plans. CASAC made the following observations about the reports. (1) Most of the programs are in the process of building a systematic way of 'closing the loop.' That is, programs articulated and described how analysis of student performance led to curricular decisions. (2) Programs are working to make distinctions between direct and indirect assessments, particularly for purposes of recognizing how well students are meeting selected outcomes. (3) Some programs are at the early stages of developing a useful system.

Assessment Plans for 2013-14. In Winter 2014, CASAC received assessment plans from 86% of degree programs (see Appendix, Table 1), an 8% increase from the previous year. Analysis of the data shows that 16 of the 18 CAS departments and one CAS program increased the number of assessment plans submitted, or maintained the number submitted the previous year. Two members from CASAC responded to each of the plans (100% response), communicating directly with program coordinators and department heads.

Communicating and Building Capacity. CASAC committee members worked as liaisons to departments, consulting with department heads and faculty. In June 2014, Doug Baker and Jenny Kindred met with all department heads (and some faculty liaisons) to elicit suggestions and to encourage participation. Through these conversations, CASAC learned that most department now have an assessment liaison or committee, although some liaisons are informal (meaning that there is agreement between the department head and a faculty member but no formal support—e.g., course release, stipend, or service benefit). Baker and Kindred also coordinated with the Faculty Development Center (and its director, Peggy Liggit, and Mary Brake of College of Technology) to design a two-day assessment workshop in May 2014. CAS faculty from Chemistry, English, and G&G participated, which helped to build capacity in the college. Finally, CASAC continued to articulate with the General Education program and College of Education programs to prepare CAS departments for those assessment expectations and to build on what has been accomplished with degree programs.

Online Tools for Communication and Data Management. CASAC continued to post all plans, reports and CASAC responses—as well as minutes for the biweekly meetings—to EMU Online (all committee members have access). However, CASAC agreed that a more robust electronic system is needed. Therefore, to provide information and support for faculty and administrators in CAS, as well as to streamline the submission process, Jenny Kindred and Doug Baker began crafting a web presence for CASAC, accessible via the CAS home page. The committee, in consultation with all CAS department heads and selected faculty, have compiled initial pages, which will go live beginning Fall semester 2014 (and pages will continue to be built over the summer and shared with the

committee for feedback and approval in early September before going live. To date, the five pages include:

- CASAC Home – Description of CASAC, mission statement, committee members and contact information. http://www.emich.edu/cas/about/casac/index.php
- Resources – Links to Assessment of Student Learning resources (crafting SLOs, curriculum mapping, HLC criteria, articles and research, etc). http://www.emich.edu/cas/about/casac/resources.php
- Examples – Links to other universities' examples of assessment plans and reports (sample CAS plans and reports will be available in the future, once we secure specific departmental permissions). http://www.emich.edu/cas/about/casac/examples.php
- Timeline and Templates- Information on when assessment plans and reports are due in upcoming years, as well as planning and reporting templates available for download. http://www.emich.edu/cas/about/casac/calendars.php
- Submitting plans and reports – An online form that departments can use to upload and submit plans and reports. http://www.emich.edu/cas/about/casac/upload.php

CASAC has also created a universal e-mail address: emu_casac@emich.edu. Using one consistent address will streamline communication: CAS faculty will no longer have to figure out whom to contact for information and support. In addition, all communication from the CASAC will now be clearly identifiable, and e-mails can be sent by anyone on the committee. Finally, CASAC will create a shared database, where plans, reports, meeting minutes, and other documents can be accessible to committee members.

SECTION II
Examples of Findings in Assessment through Use of Appropriate Assessment Methods

Examples of Assessment Processes
In collaboration with faculty of degree programs, CASAC has created a two-part system for assessing student learning. First, CASAC has constructed a consistent approach to eliciting assessment plans/reports from programs and to responding to the plans/reports. CASAC's response to program documents serves two main functions: (1) to provide suggestions about how programs might enhance the plans or reports for the next iteration; and (2) to encourage and demonstrate support for programs, particularly for "best" practices of assessment (e.g., alignment of learning outcomes, student performances and analysis of those performances). Since CASAC is faculty led, the committee believes it is vital that it responds with supportive yet useful suggestions and observations.

Feedback from CAS faculty and department heads suggests that CASAC responses to plans and reports have been useful. For example, according to Psychology department head, Ketl Freedman-Doan, faculty have found the responses helpful; Carol Schlagheck, faculty coordinator for Journalism, described to participants at the Assessment Institute (May 2014) that CASAC's support has helped her program design appropriate and useful assessments. However, some faculty would like CASAC to improve the efficacy of its responses.

Two important statements about the process of improving the culture of assessment. Math department head Chris Gardiner complimented CASAC on creating a consistent, recursive process, which he stated is needed if the college is to effectively demonstrate a coherent and useful system. Chemistry department head (and CASAC member), Steve Pernecky, who has worked with the

faculty to create a departmental standing committee on assessment (it's now part of the department's DID), said he has observed a *shift in the way of observing what students need*. Over the 19 years he's been at EMU, he has seen a change in perspective from what the university offers to what students actually learn. That is, there is a growing focus on what should students be able to do (learning outcomes) and how the program, college and university provide opportunities for students to meet those objectives. Assessment is contributing to this shift of perspective.

The second part of the CASAC system is, of course, what and how the programs design the assessments to determine how well students are meeting representative learning outcomes and what the programs do with the data (i.e., how they 'close the loop'). Below are examples.

Provide 2-3 representative examples of how programs in the college or unit have created an assessment process that align student-learning and/or service outcomes with collection and analysis practices that provide evidence of student learning and/or service effectiveness
To guide programs to design assessment systems, CASAC provides a template (see Appendix, CASAC Template for Planning & Reporting for 2013-14) for planning and reporting. Below are brief descriptions of how three programs have created effective systems.

Physics & Astronomy. The secondary education programs in Physics has organized their assessment plans around the six main standards of the National Science Teachers Association. They have elected to focus on two of the standards, "Content Knowledge" and "Professional Knowledge and Skills," and the sub-indicators for each (which function as learning outcomes). Since all candidates must take a standardized test that focuses on content knowledge, faculty plan to examine scores on the tests, including sections that address the sub-indicators, to gain insight as to how well students are demonstrating content knowledge. For the second standard, faculty will analyze required courses to determine whether or not students are required to attend a "professional meeting," one of the expectations of this standard.

CMTA: Arts and Entertainment Management Program (AEM): The AEM program relies on the internship requirement for collecting data for program assessment. Students in the major are required to complete two internships, one on campus and a second with a professional organization. Supervisor performance evaluations (which consist of open ended and ranked questions) are completed and entered into an online database. In doing so, AEM has created a structured and systematic indirect assessment plan that is aligned with all five of their student learning outcomes.

World Languages. French, German and Spanish Undergraduate Programs. Faculty in these programs have coordinated efforts for assessing student learning in two critical areas: students will be able to demonstrate their capacity to participate and contribute to conversations in the course language (i.e., the students' second language); and students will be able to present information in their second language. Data will be collected largely from teacher observation of students' oral and written performances. Impressively, the focus of these SLOs represents the next iteration of collecting and analyzing student performances, and each iteration has examined particular SLOs and suggested needed programmatic changes.

SECTION III
Examples of using assessment findings to make
(1) decisions and (2) improvements to programs

Describe two to three examples of how programs used the information gathered from assessment process to make decisions that improve the effectiveness of programs and/or enhance opportunities for students to achieve expected learning outcomes.

CMTA: Arts and Entertainment Management Program (AEM): Upon supervisor feedback from student internships in 2013, the program found that some students were not meeting benchmark competencies for the three student learning outcomes assessed. The program concluded that some students might not have been fully prepared for the practical aspects and real-world requirements of a professional internship. In other words, the largest barrier to student success in internship placements was a lack of experience in a professional office setting. As a result of these findings, the program instituted a requirement of an on-campus internship that will be taken before the off-campus internship.

Journalism, Undergraduate: The journalism program examined three main areas: the students' use of blogs and how effectively they did so, according to journalistic standards; how students develop stories; and students' ability to copyedit. The program reported (see Appendix, ENGL JRNL UG Report Sept2013, section VI): "Intuitively, we believed that our students were learning to blog (in JRNL 310) and learning to develop strong stories (in JRNL 306W) over the course of the semester. These assessments helped us begin to operationalize those observations and look more closely at what our students are learning in our classrooms. While quantitative results on JRNL 215 final exams always provided an indication of whether students were learning fundamental skills of grammar and style, the new pre- and post-tests made it much easier to see how that learning was happening during the course and how further gain might be possible."

Psychology, Undergraduate. This program elected to examine students' performances on three SLOs: knowledge base (psychology), research methods and communication, particularly writing. Faculty intended to design a comprehensive exam to assess the first SLO and to select a random number of student papers to evaluate performance on the other two SLOs. In its assessment report (see Appendix, PSY PSY UG Sept2013), the program highlighted analysis of the second and third SLO: "Our data from the review of research methods papers was heartening. That is, we found that half of the papers we reviewed for this assessment were rated at over 75% successful mastery of this writing task (papers were scored using the rubric attached below). In fact, 42% or the papers achieved a score of 80% or higher" (Section V). As importantly, the program recognized dilemmas in the process of constructing a comprehensive exam (top of Section V): mainly, for example, faculty realized a need for defining and determining the criterion for "student success."

CASAC's Plans for Next Year
CASAC will continue to observe how different departments and programs are constructing assessment systems, ones that faculty view as aligned with program goals and issues. By observing and pointing to specific examples of effective plans and reports, CASAC will be better equipped to provide examples for all faculty and programs. CASAC intends, for example, to post examples from a range of programs (e.g., Natural Sciences, Humanities, and Arts).

CASAC continues to meet with department heads and faculty, including ones who act as assessment liaisons. By providing support, resources and training to these faculty members, CASAC will

continue to build capacity across the college. Relevant to this goal is encouraging departments to develop—and support the efforts of—assessment liaisons. For example, Chemistry has formed a four-person faculty assessment committee, a standing committee that rotates in at least one new member each year. By doing so, the department is generating consistency and building capacity for evaluating student learning and enhancing programs.

Gen Ed and CAS. A critical addition to CASAC's focus this past year was how to best articulate Gen Ed. assessment plans, particularly how those might coordinate with CAS's. Mainly, CASAC will strive to support faculty in negotiating the multiple assessment demands (e.g., COE accredited programs, Gen Ed., and CAS). With the initiative and support of Chris Foreman, Doug Baker will assist in coordinating a systematic approach to evaluating student performances toward meeting SLOs for Gen Ed courses, and Jenny Kindred will continue to provide further support.

COE and CAS. Similar to the demands expected from Gen Ed., COE is approaching its accreditation visit, and educational programs from CAS will need to coordinate to compile and analyze data and prepare reports. NCATE has been replaced by CAEP; however, the general demands still exist and reports will be due either Summer 2015 or the following year, depending on which path programs elect to follow.

Assessment institute. CAS will continue to work with the Faculty Development Center and the University Assessment Committee to provide training for faculty. By doing so, EMU will continue to build capacity and help improve the culture of assessment.

Webpage and resources. As mentioned, CASAC will continue to build a webpage to support the efforts of administrators and faculty in managing assessment systems.

Appendix: Role of Assessment of Student Learning in the Accreditation Process
- CASAC Template for Planning and Reporting for 2013-14
- ENGL JRNL UG Report Sept2013
- PSY PSY UG Report Sept2013
- Table 1 Program Participation
- Table 2 Plans Rec'd 2013-14

University Assessment Committee Note:
In order for EMU to earn institutional accreditation, The Higher Learning Commission expects the university to meet five criteria (http://policy.ncahlc.org/Policies/criteria-for-accreditation.html), and one criterion focuses on assessment of student learning:

> *Criterion Four. Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement*
> The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments, and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement.

The Higher Learning Commission describes the value of assessing student learning as including the following:

"For student learning, a commitment to assessment would mean assessment at the program level that proceeds from clear goals, involves faculty at all points in the process, and analyzes the assessment results; it would also mean that the institution improves its programs or ancillary services or other operations on the basis of those analyses. Institutions committed to improvement review their programs regularly and seek external judgment, advice, or benchmarks in their assessments." (The Criteria for Accreditation: Guiding Values, http://www.ncahlc.org/Information-for-Institutions/guiding-values-new-criteria-for-accreditation.html)