

## **UAlbany's ACADEMIC Assessment Overview**

The first part of this document provides an overview of the University's academic assessment processes.

*Office of Institutional Research, Planning and Effectiveness:* This office provides primary administrative oversight of and support for the university's assessment efforts. It provides ongoing support for campus planning, budgeting, and enrollment management activities, which meet the operational information needs of the President, Vice Presidents, Deans, Directors, Chairs, and various management and planning committees within the university. In addition, the office conducts special studies and survey analyses to support campus management. Studies range from course demand analysis to educational outcomes assessment, from faculty productivity to retirement forecasting, from peer comparisons to alumni studies. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, UAlbany was among the first in the nation to undertake the systematic evaluation of all graduate and undergraduate programs on a regular cycle. The Office early on launched a series of model-driven cohort studies that placed Albany in the forefront of outcomes assessment research.

*Council on Academic Assessment -* The Council on Academic Assessment is part of the University Senate and develops campus policies relating to academic assessment; schedules, coordinates, and supervises mandated and cyclical reviews of continuing academic programs; reviews assessment reports of its committee(s). The Council has two committees:

- General Education Assessment Committee – provides leadership for establishing general education assessments and reviews and provides feedback on those assessments.
- Academic Program Review Committee – provides leadership, feedback and reporting on the academic program review process, with a particular focus on assessment in the major (or within the program) as regards the attainment of student learning outcomes.

## **Campus Academic Assessment processes:**

### **General Education Assessments**

- General Education Program and the Institutional Learning Goals for Undergraduate academic programs create a foundation that prepares students for continued work in their chosen major and minor fields and gives them the intellectual habits that will enable them to become lifelong learners.
- The General Education categories are assessed on a 5-year cycle, generally assessing 2 categories per year. IRPE collects the data from faculty, aggregates the data, and writes a summative report. These reports are shared publically on the IRPE website [https://www.albany.edu/assessment/gen\\_ed\\_assess.html](https://www.albany.edu/assessment/gen_ed_assess.html)
- The General Education Assessment Committee reviews the IRPE report, and assesses the degree to which the individual courses contained in the report are meeting the General Education learning objectives. These reports are then shared with the Council on Academic Assessment and the University Senate.

**Institutional Learning Goals (MSCHE nomenclature – locally known as “Competencies in the Major”)**

- These were adopted by the university senate in the 2017-2018 academic year and are referred to by the university as the general education academic competencies.
- They represent what the university believes are the core learning pillars that all undergraduate students should achieve.
- Each major is required to demonstrate how students meet these goals as part of their academic major.
- Goals are:
  - Advanced Writing
  - Oral Discourse
  - Information Literacy
  - Critical Thinking
- While these competencies are embedded throughout the academic experience, each department is required to demonstrate how students achieve these in their majors.
- The process by which these assessments will be administered were determined in the spring 2020 semester, and will begin with the assessment of upper level writing in the fall of 2020. The process is overseen by the Director of Assessment and the Associate Dean for General Education.

**Annual Student Learning Objective Reports**

- Assessment of individual learning objectives associated with each degree is performed on a yearly basis.
- Units submit reports reviewed by Institutional Research, with feedback on report provided to departments
- Quality of assessment and reports have improved over time as has the use of the data to improve alignment of curriculum with student learning outcomes.
- All departmental learning objectives can be found here: <https://www.albany.edu/learning-objectives/>.

**Program Review:**

- Top-to-bottom review of individual departments each 7 years- including program self-study report and site visit with external reviewers who are selected based on a set of predetermined criteria. [https://www.albany.edu/assessment/prog\\_review.html](https://www.albany.edu/assessment/prog_review.html)
- Self-study and reviewer reports evaluated and approved by Council on Academic Assessment
- Feedback is implemented through MOU between Dean and department following review
- Externally accredited programs proceed according to their program area accreditation organization requirements and timeline (e.g. APA, AAQEP, ALA, AACSB)

**Course/Teaching Assessments**

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- ITLAL Consultants will work with faculty to provide early semester feedback
  - Student evaluations are distributed to students in each course. This feedback is provided to the instructor along with department and institutional average. Chair and deans receive this information for each faculty and is supposed to be part of the ongoing conversation on course improvement.
  - Peer review of teaching is a required component of all renewal, promotion, and tenure processes.

### UAlbany ADMINISTRATIVE Review and Assessment Activities

The following is a high-level overview of the University's administrative review and assessment activities.

#### Administrative Review Process

- This process, which began in 2017-2018, requires each vice presidential and decanal unit to provide, and update annually, mission and vision statements as well as SMART goals (Specific, Measureable, Achievable, Results Focused, Time-Bound).
- An annual update report details the outcomes of that year's particular assessments as aligned to the unit's mission, goals, and objectives, and to campus strategic objectives, their findings, and any changes in programs, procedures, or operations informed by information gathered during the assessment process.
- All vice presidential and academic dean's offices complete a full review on a quinquennial cycle (every five years), this includes a self-study as well as a site visit and review by an external team. We are now in our third year of cycling through each vice presidential and academic dean's inaugural self-study.
- The protocol for these assessments can be found here:  
[https://www.albany.edu/assessment/protocol\\_assessment\\_admin\\_units\\_2019.pdf](https://www.albany.edu/assessment/protocol_assessment_admin_units_2019.pdf).
- The report is shared with the administrative head and their direct supervisor and is used for discussion of how to improve the unit.
- After the self-study and reviewer's report have been received, the Administrative Assessment Advisory Committee meets to vet the report and provide recommendations to the unit.
- The following units have completed the first round of self-study and external review:
  - 2017-18: VP Student Affairs, University Libraries, VP for Research
    - Student Affairs was more comprehensive than just the VPs office—they did a full review of all of Student Affairs as part of their NASPA reaccreditation.
  - 2018-19: Provost Office (plus Experiential Learning and Online Learning, who prepared their own self studies, but did not have separate external reviewers), CIEGS, CAS Deans Office.
  - 2019-20: Several visits were scheduled for Spring/Summer, but COVID 19 intervened. These have been postponed to 2020-21.
- If your unit was evaluated, please have examples of how the information was used to make improvements. Below are some examples:
  - The Student Affairs review noted the need for greater coordination between SA and Undergraduate Education in order to support student success. This led to greater

- coordination between the units, particularly in terms of how new student orientation is handled and the use of EAB to support student success.
- In CIEGS, the review led to a restructuring of the office as well as streamlining processes critical for supporting international students.

#### University-Wide Assessments (in addition to academic assessments and the administrative unit assessments outlined above)

- The University conducts several campus- surveys at regularly scheduled intervals (typically every three years) and are intended to advance knowledge about student life and needs on campus. These surveys are administrated and coordinated by the Office of Institutional Research, and the results are reported out on the IR assessment report webpage, and include:
  - Campus Climate
  - National Survey of Student Engagement [NSSE]
  - SUNY Student Satisfaction Survey
  - Graduate Student Assessment Survey
- There is also an institutional policy in place about how and when surveys are distributed to students: <https://www.albany.edu/ir/uasurvey/index.html>
- The Institutional Research office also provides a range of data assessments to support decision making including attrition analysis, major change analysis, and financial aid gap analysis.
  - Much of these data are available to administrative leaders via the University's Business Intelligence (BI) system.
  - Select information is made publicly available here: <https://www.albany.edu/ir/whatdata.htm>.
  - These processes allow the university to identify key student issues and gain insights.
    - An example includes the analysis showing that declining retention rates of freshman students led to initiatives that identify students who are likely to leave and connecting them with resources (see pages 48-49 in self-study).

#### Student Affairs Assessment & Planning Office

- This office was established in 2015 in order to provide assessment and feedback on co-curricular activities. (<https://www.albany.edu/studentaffairs/assessment/index.php>). The following are the goals of the unit:
  - 1) Measure overall student development
  - 2) Assess co-curricular student learning
  - 3) Identify operational and collaborative needs in the division of student affairs
  - 4) Monitor student satisfaction and their perceptions of the campus environment
  - 5) Report on findings to University stakeholders

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- The Student Affairs Assessment Council provides leadership for and conducts assessment that complements department assessment efforts and measures identified division outcomes. Additionally, the council facilitates the sharing of assessment strategies and ways to improve student learning in departments and programs within the Division of Student Affairs.
  - Student Affairs Program Review Process. This Office regularly assesses various programs delivered by the Division of Student Affairs. Some specific changes made because of this program review process include:
    - Increased focus and investment of resources towards employer relations within the Office of Career and Professional Development, including the implementation of Handshake, a web-based interface that allows employers to post jobs and internships
    - The development of the Center for Leadership and Service to provide a more focused hub for providing leadership development and service related opportunities
    - Establishment of the student-run, Student Organization Resource Center (SORC) to better advocate and assist student organizations and leaders on campus
  - Since 2010 the Division of Student Affairs has been committed to assessing student learning outside the classroom through the Student Learning Project (SLP). Notable results include:
    - Data from the Career Readiness Program indicated that freshmen were successfully able to identify professional identity development and communication and networking as essential skills needed when embarking on a career search. In addition, they could also describe background research, practice, body language and asking questions, as important components of a successful job interview.
    - In a survey conducted by Student Health Services, 27% of UAlbany students reported receiving a flu vaccination during the 2017-2018 year. 31% of vaccinated students reported the information they received from the University influenced their decision to receive the Flu vaccine.
    - Additional examples of closing the feedback loop:
      - Based on results from satisfaction surveys, Orientation and Transition programs redesigned freshmen, transfer, and international student orientation to provide more programming and separate transfer advisement sessions to better fit the needs of University students.
      - Results from the Great Dane Welcome survey indicated that students who felt homesick “often” or “very often” were significantly less likely to return to campus the next fall. Counseling and Psychological Services and the Middle Earth Peer Mentors program partnered with Student Affairs Assessment and Planning to reach out to students who indicated feeling homesick. Initial data from the pilot program indicated that students who

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interacted with a peer mentor were more likely to return to the university the following fall, than those who did not.

### Shared Governance Assessment

- The Committee on Assessment of Governance and Consultation, a Committee of the University Senate's Governance Council, is mandated by the Charter of the University Senate to evaluate, every two years, the effectiveness of the Senate in representing its constituencies, addressing issues and concerns, and in affecting institutional decisions.
- Shared governance surveys were distributed to faculty, staff, and students in 2016 & 2018.
- The Committee is responsible for compiling the results and issuing a report.
- Several examples of how the 2016 survey was used to make improvements can be found on pages 96-97 of the self-study.