What are students learning at The University of Iowa?

Annual Outcomes Assessment Update - 2017

Many departments at UI have been actively implementing student outcomes assessment for a number of years, and in recent years the university has made significant progress in strengthening outcomes assessment across all undergraduate degree programs. This report provides a summary of department involvement with outcomes assessment.

Our system for outcomes assessment similarly rests on faculty expertise and department leadership. Each department establishes learning outcomes for its undergraduate programs, determines how to best organize its curriculum to support student learning, devises appropriate strategies both for assessing student learning, and decides how to use assessment findings to further develop its programs. Central administration provides support, coordination, and resources to assist departments in carrying out assessment efforts.

Departmental Implementation for Outcomes Assessment at UI

UI departments have maintained an annual cycle of outcomes assessment of undergraduate programs since 2009/10. Annual progress reports of each year’s assessment activities are available online at http://www.uiowa.edu/assessment/learning-outcomes-reports.

While methods used for outcomes assessment vary widely, all departments are expected to:

- Develop an assessment plan
- Assign an individual to coordinate assessment of one or more outcomes annually
- Conduct a collective review of assessment findings by faculty on a regular basis
- Identify next steps for program improvement or further development

Figure 1 presents department levels of engagement in outcomes assessment. Since 2010, the percentage of departments regularly reviewing and acting on assessment data has steadily increased. At that time, roughly one-third of departments reported no outcomes assessment efforts, or nothing more than an assessment plan on paper. By 2017, all departments were actively carrying out assessment of their programs, and in most cases, reviewing and acting on the data they had collected.

As shown in Figure 1, 70% of UI departments report ways that they use findings from the program-level assessments to improve or further develop their programs. Ongoing efforts in these departments include regularly scheduled review of assessment findings, discussion of program implications, and ongoing follow-up with actions taken based on their review. Next steps for these departments are to sustain their current level of assessment and continue acting on lessons learned from the assessment data they collect.
An additional 17% of departments report that faculty work together to review assessment findings on a regular basis. Steps taken include reviewing coursework, alumni experiences, and employer perceptions of program graduates. Ongoing efforts in these departments focus on testing their outcomes assessment strategies to identify the quality of the data they are collecting and discussing implications of findings. Next steps for these departments include integrating outcomes assessment with other quality improvement efforts, and finding ways to efficiently manage assessment processes in the department.

The remaining 13% of departments have taken the step of appointing an individual to coordinate their program-level learning outcomes assessment efforts. Current efforts in these departments include further developing and pilot-testing assessment strategies. Next steps for these departments include finalizing and more fully implementing assessment plans, and bringing assessment findings to the full department for review and follow-up action.

The proportion of departments represented at each level of involvement in assessment remains relatively steady, but departments represented at each level have changed as some departments have increased their level of involvement, others have stepped back to redesign and relaunch assessment efforts in order to accommodate new curriculum or other changes in their programs, and entirely new programs have been launched.

Coordination With Other Departmental Assessment

Each department’s educational programs are reviewed as part of the department’s regularly scheduled Academic Program Review, and student learning and success are both central components of institutional accreditation. Also, nearly 40% of undergraduate programs undergo periodic disciplinary accreditation. Academic Program and Accreditation-related reviews occur every 5-10 years, depending on the department, and typically include an extensive departmental self-study and a visit by a team of external reviewers. The annual cycle of learning outcomes assessment contributes to these longer-term processes by helping departments maintain learning outcomes assessment on a year-to-year basis and by making it possible to act on current information that becomes available between Academic Program Reviews and Accreditation-related assessments.

Coordination With Other Institutional Assessment

All undergraduates are invited to take the Student Experiences in the Research University (SERU) survey. SERU gathers information about student engagement, both inside and outside the classroom. Reports of SERU data are given to each department, allowing them to compare students in their major with students in the same major at other SERU institutions and with all UI undergraduates. A series of SERU Briefs summarizing selected campus-wide responses is available online at [http://www.uiowa.edu/seru](http://www.uiowa.edu/seru)

Graduating Seniors are invited to take the UI Senior Exit Survey at the time they file to graduate. This brief survey asks students about perceptions of their student experience, what most helped or hindered their success at UI, and participation in opportunities that extend learning beyond the classroom. Reports are available online at [http://www.uiowa.edu/assessment/ui-senior-exit-survey](http://www.uiowa.edu/assessment/ui-senior-exit-survey)

The Pomerantz Career Center conducts the annual First Destination Survey of UI undergraduate alumni six to seven months after graduation. Results are reported for each undergraduate college, and are available on request to each department: [http://www.uiowa.edu/assessment/graduate-career-surveys](http://www.uiowa.edu/assessment/graduate-career-surveys)