Director of Academic Assessment

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General Evaluation and Notes Regarding 2018-19 Academic Assessment Reports (Yearly Program Assessments)

From Fall 2018 moving forward two distinct goals existed for assessment at Minot State University (MSU). First, make judicious changes that utilized inherited elements within the assessment framework but shaped them towards informed usage, instead of compliance usage. The goal of these changes was (at least) to A) reinforce language, process, practice, and thinking that were, in some sense, normalized, and B) provide tangible links from what historically has been called assessment to the present and future of assessment at MSU. We have called this agenda "climbing our mountain," which is essentially assessment for us.

Second, there were processes and practices in need of evidence as viewed by a vested external stakeholder (HLC). One that approached these issues from a decidedly peer review standpoint, which should neither be overstated nor undervalued. This stakeholder discerned issues with assessment and asked that we evidence student learning primary to our mission as it is institutionalized in learning environments, experiences, and resource allocation. Consequently, this has brought change to, among other things, documentation, refinements of student learning goals and outcomes, and conversations focused on metrics and targets. It is important these changes not be seen only as "climbing the compliance mountain" but, rather, as "claiming our mountain" and definitely assessment for us.

Moreover, 2018-19 is the last year of using the legacy assessment template and the first year of planning using the new or updated template. During this transition, several items stood out. First, in terms of planning for AY 2019-20, many programs seemed to have understood the goals of planning for assessment. As they informed these plans with previous year's data, it was evident that A) stand-out programs using the legacy template are stand-out programs using the new template; B) though targets and metrics were new to most, many programs have adjusted either using faculty judgments, past data, or both to inform targets and metrics; C) past data collection efforts, for many programs, will muddle what they perceive and do not perceive in terms of student learning, and consequently are reflected in the planning.

Second, consistency is the theme that best captures 2018-19 reports. Consistent use of data from most programs, consistent commentary on student learning and learning environments, consistent use of column five (budgeting), and consistent use of measures to collect data. Issues related to student learning goals and outcomes were considered in light of the updates that are cataloged in the AY 2019-20 plans.

Finally, as we move into the next 2-3 years several important questions need to be thought through. Questions such as, A) What is the next phase for assessment liaisons?, B) How do we better facilitate comprehension of assessment from fundamentals to more sophisticated methods in areas like data collection, framework development, and streamlining of the assessment process?, C) How do we transition the present template from heuristic to primary point of meaningful collaboration? Finally, addressing the intertwined nature of assessment with institutional resources, capacity, and paradigm is pivotal to pace and direction.