



Ursinus College

***Student Learning and
Institutional Effectiveness Assessment
Structures and Processes***

A Campus Community Resource

*Working Document for Comment
2016-17*

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I. Introduction

A. Assessment of Student Learning and Institutional Effectiveness

“The effectiveness of an institution rests upon the contribution that each of the institution’s programs and services makes toward achieving the goals of the institution as a whole.”
(excerpt from *Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education*, p. 25)

The Ursinus College Institutional Effectiveness Assessment Plan has been created to assist our campus community in developing and maintaining an organized and sustainable program of assessment that improves the quality of the student experience.

The assessment plan outlines the guiding principles set forth in our mission and strategic plan as well as the structure, coordination, resources and support for assessment. The plan is a flexible and living document that will be reviewed and updated annually so that it reflects the current state of our assessment. In our efforts to assess our mission and goals, we will ensure that assessment is efficient, effective and purposeful in providing evidence that demonstrates our success in delivering a transformative education for our students.

The purpose of assessment is to improve, inform, and support student learning and to achieve the mission and strategic goals of the college. As assessment in higher education has increasingly grown in response to external accountability and transparency demands, our true desire is to use assessment for the benefit of our students and the college. Assessment data, translated into useful information, is the basis for making better decisions.

The collaboration of our faculty and staff in reviewing, analyzing and improving the educational experience of our students through assessment leads to a comprehensive understanding of institutional effectiveness. Assessment of institutional effectiveness includes all aspects of the college that either directly or indirectly contributes to student success. The student experience includes experiences in the classroom, as well as in our co-curricular and residential life programs. The student experience is also supported by administrative areas that carry out the business aspects of the college.

B. What is the value of assessment?

Assessment in the context of student learning and institutional effectiveness is designed to answer the question, “is the college fulfilling its mission and achieving its goals?” Assessment enables informed planning and decision-making that benefits our academic programs as well as our academic support and administrative services.

Assessment can help review the effectiveness and alignment of curricula; improve program outcomes; understand impact of program changes; highlight program successes; provide evidence when requesting resources; inform students of the intended learning outcomes. Assessment also enables those areas that provide support services and administrative functions to enhance our overall student experience to identify areas where services excel and areas in need of improvement.

As outlined in the Middle States Commission on Higher Education’s *Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education* guide:

Effective assessment processes are useful, cost-effective, reasonably accurate and truthful, carefully planned, and organized, systematic, and sustained.

- Useful: An effective assessment process help faculty and staff make appropriate decisions about improving programs and services, developing goals and plans, and making resource allocations. Because institutions, their students, and their environments are continually evolving, effective assessments cannot be static; they must be reviewed periodically and adapted in order to remain useful.
- Cost-effective: The benefits of assessment should exceed the investment made in developing and implementing ongoing assessment. Effective assessments are simple rather than elaborate, and they may focus on just a few key goals in each program, unit, and curriculum.
- Reasonably accurate and truthful: Assessment should provide reliable information that can be used with confidence. Because there is no one perfectly accurate assessment tool or strategy, institutions should use multiple kinds of measures to assess goal achievement. Assessments may be quantitative or qualitative and developed locally or by an external organization. Strategies to assess student learning should include direct—clear, visible, and convincing—evidence, rather than solely indirect evidence of student learning such as surveys and focus groups.
- Planned: Assessment processes should purposefully correspond to institutional and unit-level plans and goals.
- Organized, systematized, and sustained: Assessment is not a one-time activity, nor a periodic activity that coincides with accreditation. Because the environment in which the college operates is dynamic, assessment needs to be continual. There should be clear interrelationships among institutional goals, program- and unit-level goals, and course level goals.

(Excerpt from [Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education](#), p. 26)

II. Ursinus Guiding Principles

Ursinus College assessment processes and practices endeavor to be grounded in our mission and strategic plan priorities.

A. Ursinus College Mission Statement

The mission of the College is to enable students to become independent, responsible, and thoughtful individuals through a program of liberal education. That education prepares them to live creatively and usefully, and to provide leadership for their society in an interdependent world.

Liberal education is provided through an academic program that empowers the intellect, awakens moral sensitivity, and challenges students to improve society. Students gain intellectual curiosity, the capacity to think analytically, critically, and creatively, and the skill to express thoughts with logic, clarity, and grace. Further, they develop a deepened sense of human history and an understanding of who they are as persons, what they ought to do as citizens, and how they best can appreciate the diversity and ambiguity of contemporary experience.

Link to Mission Statement:

<https://www.ursinus.edu/about/basic-facts/mission-statement/>

B. Strategic Plan Priorities and Recommendations

As Ursinus' current strategic plan comes to a close at the end of the 2016-17 academic year, the college has already started to lay the foundation of the next strategic plan. Termed "Ursinus 150," this strategic vision is built upon the accomplishments of the current strategic plan, and is designed to guide the College up to—and beyond—its Sesquicentennial celebration in 2019-2020.

Annual progress reports for the current [strategic plan](#) are submitted to the Campus Planning and Priorities Committee (CPPC) at the conclusion of the academic year. The CPPC reviews these updates, assesses needs for revisions, and requests for budgetary allocations. The priorities and recommendations are outlined below.

The current Implementation Plan may be found in the shared drive: S:\Share\Assessment Resources\Strategic Plan\2015-16 implementation

PRIORITY ONE: Maintain the academic strengths of the college while assessing each academic program to identify areas of distinction.

Recommendation 1: Strengthen and support the CIE, evaluate and fortify the first-year experience, and consolidate the link between the two.

Recommendation 2: Evaluate and strengthen the core to ensure we are meeting the goals and mission of the college.

Recommendation 3: Create interdisciplinary centers that further cultivate the capacity for reflective judgment and that offer students opportunities to exercise it on and off campus.

Recommendation 4: Examine departmental programs to determine their distinctiveness, rigor and relevance to this generation of students.

Recommendation 5: Affirm the value of student-faculty collaborations in research and creative production by supporting them wholeheartedly.

PRIORITY TWO: Create initiatives to link academic learning with applied learning and post-baccalaureate work.

Recommendation 6: Review and strengthen the Independent Learning Experience.

Recommendation 7: Improve engagement with external audiences (alumni, parents and area employers) to connect students with internship, career, and postgraduate opportunities.

Recommendation 8: Create a culture of service and community engagement.

Recommendation 9: Provide support for faculty and staff to better link academic learning with applied learning and post-baccalaureate opportunities.

PRIORITY THREE: Manage student body size by focusing on retention.

Recommendation 10: Reassess the desirable academic and extracurricular qualities of Ursinus applicants and the allocation of financial aid needed to encourage their matriculation.

Recommendation 11: Improve the consistency and effectiveness of academic advising to boost student success and satisfaction.

Recommendation 12: Review the structure of our academic requirements.

Recommendation 13: Develop an empirical, Ursinus-specific retention model.

PRIORITY FOUR: Shape the campus community for diversity.

Recommendation 14: Work toward an inclusive campus community.

Recommendation 15: Better coordinate diversity efforts.

Recommendation 16: Establish consistent campus-wide hiring practices and training in diversity issues to ensure increased and continued efforts to recruit a diverse faculty and staff.

PRIORITY FIVE: Make Ursinus a workplace of choice.

Recommendation 17: Keep salaries competitive to attract and retain talented employees, and maintain open communication about salaries through open discussion and by providing data.

Recommendation 18: Review healthcare and other benefits, and better communicate how they support the employees of the college.

Recommendation 19: Offer employees clear avenues for improvement and professional development.

Recommendation 20: Identify and address understaffing in critical areas of the college.

Recommendation 21: Establish structured opportunities for employees to be heard, to learn, and to see change.

PRIORITY SIX: Improve town-gown relationships.

Recommendation 22: Encourage student civic engagement across the college.

Recommendation 23: Make the Ursinus campus a more welcoming destination for the community.

Recommendation 24: Investigate ways to welcome students into the surrounding community.

Recommendation 25: Find ways for the college and surrounding community to engage in mutually-advantageous partnerships.

Recommendation 26: Improve communications between Ursinus and the surrounding community.

PRIORITY SEVEN: Engage our alumni

Recommendation 27: Identify and build relationships with all Ursinus constituents in a systematic and coordinated way.

Recommendation 28: Recognize and value all forms of alumni contributions to the campus.

Recommendation 29: Create vehicles to give alumni a voice, networks, and leadership opportunities.

Recommendation 30: Enhance all forms of communication with alumni.

Recommendation 31: Exploit Ursinus pride and thoughtfully establish traditions for students as well as alumni.

PRIORITY EIGHT: Increase fundraising for the goals outlined in this strategic plan.

Recommendation 32: Create opportunities to build constituency connections that foster lifelong attachments and philanthropy.

Recommendation 33: Engage in a significant comprehensive campaign.

III. Assessment Structures and Processes

A. Campus-wide Assessment Model

From the college’s mission statement to the individual student learning outcomes and administrative objectives of each department, the goal is to promote the value of assessing how each area contributes to the achievement of our success. As we continue to integrate assessment into all areas of the college (academic programs, academic support programs and services, and administrative departments), a larger, community-wide assessment model has been developed that more clearly articulates the important aspects of student learning outcomes assessment as well as institutional effectiveness assessment.



A new communication method, GLAM, has been adopted to keep the importance academic student learning outcomes assessment and the cyclical nature of it at the forefront. Goals, Learning Opportunities, Assess, Make Improvements has been the focus of the assessment progress and support resources for departments.

The assessment of programs and services within academic support and administrative areas is now coordinated via an annual report and outcomes assessment initiative launched in 2014-15. This process is sustained at the departmental level and communications shared through the departments heads group (formerly College Council).

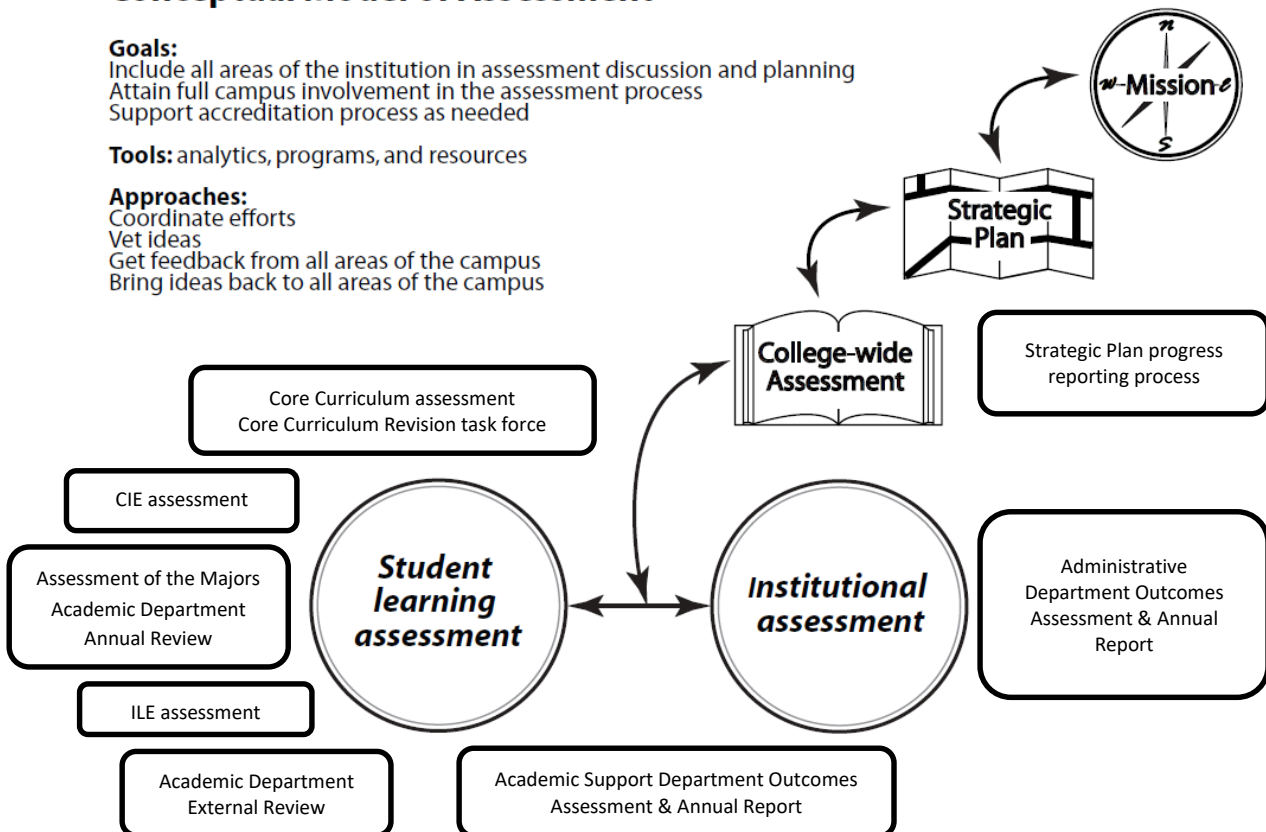
In addition, the college has developed a [College Assessment website](#) that links to student learning outcomes, current core and departmental assessment processes and templates, information disseminated by the Outcomes Assessment Committee, a FAQ, as well as links to our internal GLAM communications and external assessment resources.

Conceptual Model of Assessment

Goals:
 Include all areas of the institution in assessment discussion and planning
 Attain full campus involvement in the assessment process
 Support accreditation process as needed

Tools: analytics, programs, and resources

Approaches:
 Coordinate efforts
 Vet ideas
 Get feedback from all areas of the campus
 Bring ideas back to all areas of the campus



B. Student Learning Assessment

Student learning focused goals and outcomes are found in both the academic curriculum and in co-curricular programs and services. The development, planning and implementation of student learning assessment occurs through the following main mechanisms/structures:

- Core Curriculum Assessment
- Academic Majors and Programs Assessment
- Common Intellectual Experience Assessment
- Independent Learning Experience Assessment
- Academic External Review
- Academic Support and Administrative Outcomes Assessment

Student learning assessment processes and findings are frequently shared in faculty common hours and faculty salons in addition to email and website postings.

1. Core Curriculum

A complete assessment of the learning goals of the core curriculum was undertaken in the summer of 2015. Departments submitted student assignments from spring 2015 courses that were designated as fulfilling the core curriculum. These assignments, called “artifacts” were then anonymized. Volunteer faculty came together to develop a rubric for each learning goal that was then used to complete the assessment. More information about this process may be found on the [College Assessment website](#) and in the shared drive Assessment Resources > Core Curriculum Assessment. Overview finding from the core assessment were shared at a [fall 2015 Faculty Common Hour](#) and followed up by sharing of detailed finding by learning goal in brown-bag lunch meetings with faculty so that each learning goal could be discussed in depth as well as discuss future implications.

Moving forward, an assessment cycle has been developed to continue the ongoing assessment for the core. Discussions and findings from these assessments will also be used to inform the revised core.

Core Curriculum Requirements and Learning Goals

The current core curriculum was approved by the faculty on December 6, 2000. Global Diversity and Diversity in the United States courses were added by the faculty on February 7, 2000. Learning goals were based on language describing the core curriculum found on pages 10 and 11 of the 2014/2015 college catalog.

Core Curriculum Requirement	Learning Goal PDF for Printing (includes learning goal criteria)
Arts	Students should be able to demonstrate an appreciation for making and regarding art. Art Rubric
Diversity in the United States	Focusing in a substantive or comparative way on aspects that tend to differentiate groups in American Society. Diversity Rubric
Foreign Languages	Demonstrate intellectual discipline. Describe their understanding across cultures. Foreign Languages Rubric
Global Diversity	Focusing on issues that deal entirely or in a comparative way with cultures originating from outside the United States or Western Europe. Global Rubric
Humanities	Describe their view of the human experience. Humanities Rubric
Laboratory Science	Demonstrate scientific literacy (scientific reasoning). Demonstrate awareness of issues of science as they influence the individual and society. Lab Science Rubric
Mathematics	Demonstrate deductive reasoning skills. Mathematics Rubric

Quantitative Reasoning	Demonstrate experience with quantitative data. Quantitative Rubric
Social Science	Describe the complex relationship of the individual and society. Social Science Rubric
Independent Learning Experience	ILE rubric

Additional areas of the curriculum were assessed based on recommendations from our accrediting agency in the publication, "Students Learning Assessment: Options and Resources" (Middle States Commission on Higher Education, 2007).

Recommended by MSCHE	Criteria
Critical Analysis and Reasoning	Explain issues/problems that will be considered critically. Use information from sources to investigate a point of view or conclusion. Show awareness of context and assumptions. Take a position (perspective, thesis/ hypothesis). Make conclusions connected to related outcomes (implications and consequences). Critical Analysis and Reasoning Rubric
Information Literacy & Technological Competency	Recognize technology tools that can facilitate learning, writing and basic understanding of society (TC). Effectively use a spectrum of basic computer technologies (such as, but not limited to, the web, Office software, e-mail, blogging, social media) (TC). Determine and access the tools necessary to find the best information (IL). Use discipline-specific technologies to collect, gather and analyze data (TC). Evaluate and use information critically (IL). Use information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose (IL). Use retrieved information in an ethical and responsible way (IL). Recognize and adapt to new technologies they have not yet been confronted with (TC). Information Literacy and Technological Competency Rubric

Updated 1/6/2016

Core Curriculum Assessment Cycle

Assessment of the core curriculum is a continuous process using results of previous assessment to inform the next phase. As such, the following schedule was designed to ensure that each learning goal will be assessed at least once every three to four years. The cycle for the learning goal assessment was informed by faculty discussions of the results of the 2015 core assessment, recommendations for next steps in the process, and in consultation with the Outcomes Assessment Committee.

<https://www.ursinus.edu/offices/academic-affairs/assessment/core-curriculum-assessment/core-curriculum-assessment-cycle/>

Core Learning Goal	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18*	2018-19	2019-20**
Arts				X	
Diversity-Global		X			
Diversity-US		X			
Foreign Languages	X				X
Humanities				X	
Lab Sciences	X				X
Mathematics				X	
Quantitative Reasoning	X				X
Social Science		X			
Independent Learning Experience				X	
Critical Analysis & Reasoning			X		
Information Literacy			X		
Technological Competence			X		

*Anticipate implementation of new core curriculum with fall 2017 first year students. Assessment cycle to be determined. **Anticipate that 2019-20 will be the last year to assess the current core curriculum. Each year, the rubric for the learning goal will be reviewed and refined (if necessary), student assignments will be submitted from departments teaching core courses that fulfill the learning goal, and assessment sessions will be scheduled. In fall 2015 the rubric for foreign language was revised and at the end of spring 2016, assignments will be collected for assessment in early summer 2016. For the lab science and quantitative learning goals, student assignments were redesigned for fall 2015 to more specifically address all the learning goals. Assessment of these assignments will be completed in spring 2016. In 2016-17, the rubrics for Global Diversity, US Diversity, and Social Sciences will be reviewed and refined, assignments collection, and assessment in spring/summer 2017.

2. Common Intellectual Experience

The learning goals of the [Common Intellectual Experience \(CIE\)](#) are articulate the following:

1. Students will develop habits of self-reflection.

They will demonstrate this by:

- articulating their own stances and values on issues related to course discussion;
- expressing willingness to question their own assumptions and take intellectual risks; and
- exhibiting curiosity about the reasons behind, consequences of, and connections between their own ideas, values, and life experiences.

2. Students will become active participants in a campus intellectual community.

They will demonstrate this by:

- expressing appreciation for and engagement with multiple perspectives on any given problem, question, or topic; and
- showing openness to discussion of complex and/or sensitive topics in a setting where disagreement is likely.

3. Students will become better critical readers of texts from a wide range of disciplines, cultures and time periods.

They will demonstrate this by:

- asking questions of texts and
- actively engaging with authors' ideas, language, and arguments.

4. Students will become more skilled participants in group discussions.

They will demonstrate this by:

- participating actively in discussions that touch on sensitive questions or questions of basic values and submitting their views to the scrutiny of their peers;
- clearly presenting their own ideas and arguments;
- listening thoughtfully and respectfully to the ideas of others; and
- considering, questioning, and responding creatively to the themes and topics of class discussion.

5. Students will become better writers.

They will demonstrate this by:

- constructing clear, articulate, and compelling arguments and ideas;
- developing a creative and original voice in writing;
- making appropriate and effective use of texts in developing their arguments and ideas; and
- taking part in a substantive drafting and revision process.

3. Academic Majors and Programs

Academic majors and interdisciplinary programs are in the practice of completing an annual assessment review along with summaries of student and faculty achievement.

The Outcomes Assessment Committee (OAC) each year reviews the [reporting template](#) and makes revisions as necessary. The OAC also provides guidance and support to the academic departments in development of goals and assessment methods. The assessment portions of the reports are reviewed by members of the OAC using the rubric below as a guide. The OAC members then meet with departments to discuss strengths and weaknesses and plans for assessment.

2016-17 Rubric – Review of Department 2015-16 Annual Reports (OAC visits in 2016-17)

Learning Outcomes/Goals Rating	1 – Student Learning Outcomes not present 2 – SLOs present but not measurable or thorough or challenging 3 – SLOs present and, for the most part, measurable, thorough, and challenging
Learning Outcomes Touch on Writing and Oral (Y/N?)	
Indirect Assessment Rating	1 – No indirect assessment done in 2015-16 2 – Indirect assessment done, but problems with validity, reliability, or sustainability 3 – Indirect assessment done, and, for the most part, valid, reliable, and sustainable
Indirect Assessment Analysis and Use Rating	1 – Indirect assessment not analyzed; no changes implemented; no changes planned 2 – Indirect assessment analyzed but resulted in limited or no changes 3 – Indirect assessment analyzed and resulted in meaningful planned or implemented changes
Direct Assessment Rating	1 – No direct assessment done in 2015-16 2 – Assessment done, but problems with validity, reliability, or sustainability 3 – Assessment done, and, for the most part, valid, reliable, and sustainable
Direct Assessment Analysis and Use Rating	1 – Direct assessment not analyzed; no changes implemented; no changes planned 2 – Direct assessment analyzed but resulted in limited or no changes 3 – Direct assessment analyzed and resulted in meaningful planned or implemented changes
Curriculum Map Rating	1 – No curriculum map present with annual report. 2 – Curriculum map present and basic. 3 – Curriculum map present and detailed.

Writing Intensive Requirement, Oral Presentation and Capstone Courses

[The guidelines below](#), prepared by Academic Council and Committee on Outcomes Assessment and adopted by Faculty May 18, 2012, outline the on-going expectations of courses designated as writing intensive, the oral presentation requirement, and capstone courses.

The guidelines below are provided to assist departments and faculty in conceptualizing and designing courses that fulfill these three requirements. Departments will differ in the ways that they implement the guidelines because of disciplinary differences and practical issues such as the number of students in capstone courses. Faculty within each department should design departmental

criteria for uniform implementation of the capstone, writing requirement, and oral presentation requirements in departmental courses that address these requirements. In addition, faculty within each department should design uniform departmental criteria for assessing how successfully students have met the goals of the college and department with regards to the three requirements.

I. The Ursinus Writing-Intensive (W) Course

Writing must be conceptualized as a mode of thinking and learning as well as proof of a student's acquisition of knowledge. Thus, writing is not just an end-product but is integrated into the course as the process of learning. In W courses students should practice skills common to good writing in any context but also learn the conventions of discourse and research in a chosen discipline.

Goals for Writing Intensive (W) Courses:

- Students should be instructed in the type of writing required in the course.
- Students should be made aware of the criteria on which they will be assessed.
 - ◊ Each W course should help each student create an adequate subject position as a scholar in a particular field of study by giving each student the proper conventions of discipline-specific discourse, e.g., proper use of vocabulary, ways of expressing an argument, and ways of critiquing an argument. To develop an adequate subject position, one must know how to adequately perform and display research.
 - ◊ Each W course should include discipline-specific writing assignments: lab or research reports, summaries of scholarly articles, critiques of /or responses to the research of other authors, interpretations, proposals, and other thesis-driven arguments.
 - Each W course should require assignments that emphasize information literacy (research, knowledge of research tools, citation format, and assessment of sources).
 - Each W course should require revision for most, if not all, formal writing assignments.
 - Each W course should require informal writing assignments as well as formal writing assignments.

Suggestions for Departmental Implementation:

- Ideally a W course should be taken in the major in the sophomore year.
- Instructors are strongly encouraged to maintain a consistent partnership with Myrin Library and the Center for Writing for W courses.

Assessment of Student Work in the Writing Intensive (W) Course:

The CLA and AACU have general criteria that can serve as guidelines for writing assessment. However, those criteria should be seen as models that can be modified based on departmental values. Therefore, we strongly suggest that each department create its own criteria for writing effectiveness.

II. Oral Presentation Requirement

The oral presentation requirement is intended to foster students' ability to speak to audiences in a range of situations, including presentation of scholarly work within their discipline. The requirement helps prepare students for the world after Ursinus.

Goals for the Oral Presentation Requirement:

- Students should be instructed in speaking and accessory skills such as research.
- Students should be made aware of the criteria on which they will be assessed.
- Students should learn the conventions of speech in their discipline and utilize them in their presentations before faculty and other students.

Considerations for departmental implementation:

- Ideally students will complete the oral presentation requirement within the major in the capstone course.
- The oral presentation should be delivered to an audience of students and faculty.
- The capstone oral presentation should account for no less than 10% of the students' final grade.
- Students should have an opportunity for multiple oral presentations with instructor feedback in their major prior to the capstone oral presentation.

Assessment of Student Achievement of Oral Presentation Requirement Goals:

Every department should foster uniformity among courses that fulfill the oral presentation goal within the department by developing a set of uniform criteria to help guide and assess students work.

III. The Ursinus Capstone Course / Experience

All students are required to complete a capstone course in their major(s). The Capstone should provide challenging opportunities to put the skills of the major to use in situations similar to those students may encounter after graduation. The Capstone is the culminating educational experience in the major.

Goals for Capstone Courses:

- This course/experience should offer an opportunity to apply, refine, synthesize, and consolidate the core competencies, information, and principles of the discipline.
- The capstone should permit students to develop and showcase their talents through participation in discussion, analysis, writing, problem-solving, presentations, and/or other experiential tasks that embody the discipline's approach to scholarship or performance
- The capstone experience should enhance the student's confidence in their ability to do the work of their discipline by putting its methods and language into actual practice.

Considerations for Departmental Implementation:

- Ideally students will have been introduced to the conventions of both written and oral discourse in the major prior to taking the Capstone.
- The Capstone is ideally taken at or near the conclusion of work in the major and only when all prerequisites for the Capstone are met but no earlier than the junior year.

Assessment of Student Achievement of Capstone Goals:

Every department should foster uniformity among Capstone courses within the department by developing a set of criteria to help guide and assess students' Capstone project work.

Assessment of courses in meeting these three requirements:

The effectiveness of courses in helping students to meet these goals will continue to be part of departmental assessment and departmental external reviews and Middle States Accreditation studies. The data collected from these assessments will continue to be analyzed by the Ursinus College Outcomes Assessment Committee and presented to the appropriate departments and committees.

4. Independent Learning Experience

Assessment of the [Independent Learning Experience](#) will be integrated into the assessment cycle of the current core curriculum. The ILE requirement is fulfilled by a completion of a single project of at least three credits in a single semester or summer in one of these categories: (a) an independent research project or a creative project (including but not limited to honors); (b) an internship; (c) an approved study abroad

program or (d) student teaching. The requirement can also be fulfilled by completion of a project in the Summer Fellows program or a comparable summer research program. For pre-engineering students, successful completion of the first of two years at the engineering school satisfies the ILE requirement.

The Independent Learning Experience will provide students with the opportunity to:

1. develop independent thinking skills, their awareness of self and others, and their capacity for reflection by adopting different perspectives and inquiring into their own beliefs.
2. apply knowledge and skills learned in the classroom successfully and thoughtfully to an experience outside of the classroom.
3. gain knowledge and skills that are applicable to future pursuits.
4. produce evidence of their ability to synthesize their learning inside and outside of the classroom (e.g., internship essay, public presentation, research paper) to be shared with others.

5. External Review

Academic departments participate in an external review process that is completed by each department on a ten year cycle. A report is prepared by departments for an external review committee that includes assessment of their academic programming. The response from reviewers is provided to departments and the Dean of the College. The data and information collected through the department self-study, and the feedback from the external reviewers provide a wealth of assessment finding that can be used to improve both the curriculum and departmental operations.

6. Academic Support and Administrative Departments

Student learning occurs not only in the classroom, but also, outside the classroom through co-curricular experiences. Departments that sponsor programs and services that contribute to student learning articulate and assess their learning outcomes on an annual basis through a newly created assessment process. More detail on this process may be found in [Section 3](#) of Institutional Effectiveness Assessment below.

C. Institutional Effectiveness Assessment

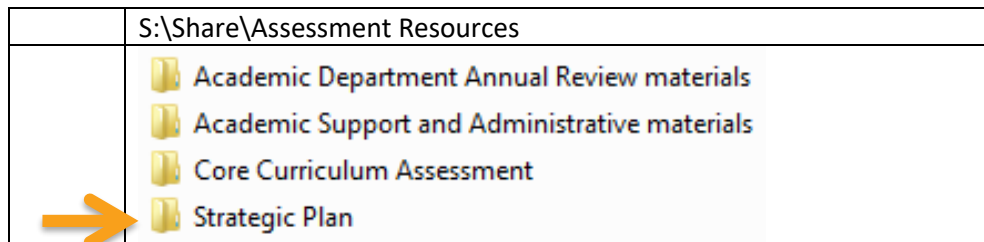
In addition to assessment of student learning described above, assessment of the effectiveness of college operations, programs, and services is also taking place campus-wide. The planning and implementation of institutional effectiveness assessment occurs through the following main mechanisms/structures:

- Strategic Plan
- College Core Strategic Indicators
- Academic Support and Administrative Outcomes Assessment and Annual Report
- Institutional Assessment

1. Strategic Plan

The current [strategic plan](#), “Transformative Education: A Strategic Plan for Ursinus College,” was the result of a campus-wide collaborative process to expand upon eight propositions offered by then President, Bobby Fong. Work groups composed of faculty members, staff members, trustees, alumni, and representatives from the local community gathered quantitative and qualitative information from across campus to determine the direction the college should move in during the next several years. These work groups submitted detailed proposals to the president for consideration that were based on their findings. These reports transformed the eight propositions into eight strategic priorities with thirty-three recommendations. The president pulled together the suggestions into a draft of a comprehensive plan that was reviewed by the Campus Planning and Priority Committee (CPPC), a committee with principle responsibility for institutional planning. The draft was then circulated to the campus community for comment and feedback. CPPC integrated this feedback into the plan, which was then brought to the Board of Trustees in 2012.

An Implementation Plan was developed to both assign responsibility of each Priority and Recommendation to a campus community member. Within each Recommendation, a list of Activity Leaders are provided to work with the Recommendation Coordinator. The current Implementation Plan may be found in the Assessment Resources shared drive, in the Strategic Plan folder.



For the current strategic plan, tracking and reporting of progress on the Priorities and Recommendations in the Strategic Plan is the responsibility of CPPC. This group meets monthly to discuss progress on the priorities and recommendations as well as the changing needs of the campus that may affect achievement of the recommendations.

Although an annual update was reported at the conclusion of each of the first two years, a revised assessment process was implemented in Academic Year 2014-2015. Revisions were made for documentation and data collection as well as a clearer delineation of responsibilities and the process. A template was created so that there was a more uniform reporting process across campus that included benchmarks to measure progress towards reaching goals in the Strategic Plan as well as provide more concrete evidence to inform planning and resource allocation. The revisions to the process resulted in descriptions of attainable benchmarks to measure progress. While most recommendations in the Strategic Plan are ongoing, some projects within recommendations have been completed and others are underway.

Below are the responsibilities of those assigned in the Implementation Plan:

CPPC Members

- Responsible for oversight of Priorities and monitoring the progress of the Recommendations.
 - Review all reports within assigned priority
 - Determine which activities are still priorities and what may no longer be relevant for discussion at CPPC meeting(s).
 - Ensure ongoing monitoring of recommendation is being facilitated by Recommendation Coordinators who in turn coordinate the Activity Leader updates.
 - Meet with Recommendation Coordinators within the assigned Priority; explain responsibilities and expectations; share materials (full strategic plan, implementation document; progress report template)
 - Discuss findings from CPPC summary documents and map out next steps with Recommendation Coordinator

Recommendation Coordinators:

- Responsible for oversight of the Recommendation and for monitoring progress of the activities (numbered items) within the Recommendation.
 - Meet at least once per semester with Activity Leaders to monitor progress
 - Work with Activity Leaders to review previously identified measures from CPPC recommendation summaries or determine measures of success (targets/benchmarks/criteria) and assessment methods.
 - Identify and contact any additional campus personnel who may be able to provide information on activities.
 - Assist in addressing areas in need of attention and communicate with the CPPC Priority Leader to vet concerns/resolve issues.
 - Coordinate and submit materials for annual update report process with activity leaders.

Activity Leaders:

- Responsible for operational planning, execution, and assessment of activities within Recommendation either within their areas or coordinate among multiple departments.
 - In a typical year, Activity Leaders will work on their activities, complete assessment of progress in the spring (where applicable), review results and plan next steps to implement within an appropriate timeline.
 - Responsible for collecting base line data or information that informs where the activity is starting from and to identify the targets that indicate success and/or completion.
 - Inform Recommendation Coordinators of circumstances that are impacting the progress of the activity (changes that have made the activity irrelevant, in need of revision, etc.)
 - Complete annual update report process documentation.

The progress report template and guidelines may be found in the Assessment Resources shared drive.

2. Core Strategic Indicators

At the institutional level, core strategic indicators and metrics are identified and tracked for use by the Board of Trustees and senior leadership. The indicators focus on Enrollment, Faculty, Student Outcomes, Financial Aid, Finance, and Advancement. The Core Strategic Indicators dashboard is also shared with faculty and staff via the [institutional effectiveness website](#). These trends are also reviewed in context to comparison institutions to benchmark our standing in comparison to peer and aspirant groups.

3. Academic Support and Administrative Departments

An annual report and outcomes assessment process for academic support programs and administrative departments was implemented in the 2014-2015 academic year. This process included assisting departments in refining existing or developing new goals and measurable outcomes or objectives that are directly linked to the mission of the college and strategic plan priorities. The template for the first year of the Annual Report and Outcomes Assessment process included a section that stepped departments through the articulation of an assessment method for the outcome or objective, the criteria for success, the timeline anticipated, and a plan for how the department was going to use the results. This report process has been completed by departments and programs at least once and most are in their second cycle that will require departments to report on assessment results. The reporting template and guidelines may be found on the [College Assessment website](#) or in the Assessment Resources shared drive.

Assessments outlined by academic support and administrative departments also include existing data collection and reporting that have been a long-standing practice for these areas. Below are a sample of some of the existing practices, it is not an exhaustive list.

Department	Assessment/Data Collection
Center for Writing & Speaking	Usage statistics; Student reflection survey on learning goals
Career and Professional Development	Post-graduation Destination Report; Internship Report; Usage statistics
Center for Academic Support	First-Year student advising report; Sophomore Chats; Major/Minor Expo Evaluations
Athletics	Yearly coach and faculty lunch discussion sessions; metrics tracking Athletics Snapshot; Senior student-athlete exit interviews
Study Abroad	Exploratory Advising Questionnaire; Post-study abroad experience reflective questionnaire
Library and Information Technology	Measuring Information Service Outcomes (MISO) survey; student and faculty survey of experience with academic and student IT environment
Counseling and Wellness	Usage statistics
Residence Life	Residence Life Office program model effectiveness and satisfaction survey
Campus Safety	Campus safety survey to assess overall perception of campus safety

4. Institutional Data and Assessment

A number of departments across campus engage in assessment activities that may be helpful in other departments and institutional improvement efforts. In addition, the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness, in collaboration with Outcomes Assessment Committee, manages the administration of the following surveys about our students and faculty that can be used for indirect assessment of student learning. Results from these surveys have been used to inform progress toward the strategic plan recommendations, progress toward student learning goals, and progress toward operational objectives.

- Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement (Fall 2016 first year cohort)
- National Survey of Student Engagement (Spring 2015 – 2014 cohort first year students & Class of 2015 seniors)
- Higher Education Data Sharing Consortium Senior Survey (Spring 2014 – Class of 2014))
- Higher Education Research Institute Faculty Survey (Spring 2014)

Regularly tracked institutional data are posted on the [Institutional Research website](#):

- First-Year Student Admission Trends
- Enrollment Trends
- Student Demographics
- Retention Rate Trends
- Degrees Awarded Trends
- Graduation Rate Trends
 - 6-Year Graduation Rates by Race-by Gender (HEOA)
 - 6-Year Graduation Rates by Federal Aid Category (HEOA)

Institutional data are also reported to [external audiences](#) that campus constituencies may find helpful:

- National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) - College Navigator: [Ursinus College](#)
- University and College Accountability Network -UCAN: [Ursinus College](#)
- College Affordability and Transparency Center -College Scorecard: [Ursinus College](#)
- Middle States Commission on Higher Education -MSCHE: [Ursinus College](#)

IV. External Review and Accountability

It is part of our institutional responsibility to not only work to achieve the academic standards set by Ursinus College for our students' success, but also the standards of academic quality set by our regional accrediting body, [Middle States Commission on Higher Education](#).

A. Middle States Commission on Higher Education

Ursinus College is accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE). Middle States is a regional accrediting body recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). MSCHE is a voluntary, non-governmental, membership association that utilizes peer evaluation for quality assurance and improvement. Middle States looks at the college as a whole and how all programs, departments, and administrative functions work together to achieve our mission and goals. The accreditation process is an opportunity to demonstrate an institution's accountability and improvement, both internally and externally. Accreditation is required for the college to have access to federal and state funds.

B. MSCHE Standards of Accreditation

In 2014, Middle States member institutions approved revised *Standards for Accreditation and Requirements of Affiliation*. Our 2018-19 self-study will utilize these revised standards. The seven standards are listed below and the full descriptions may be found in the publication at the link below:

<http://www.msche.org/publications/RevisedStandardsFINAL.pdf>

Standard I: Mission and Goals

The institution's mission defines its purpose within the context of higher education, the students it serves, and what it intends to accomplish. The institution's stated goals are clearly linked to its mission and specify how the institution fulfills its mission.

Standard II: Ethics and Integrity

Ethics and integrity are central, indispensable, and defining hallmarks of effective higher education institutions. In all activities, whether internal or external, an institution must be faithful to its mission, honor its contracts and commitments, adhere to its policies, and represent itself truthfully.

Standard III: Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience

An institution provides students with learning experiences that are characterized by rigor and coherence of all program, certificate, and degree levels, regardless of instructional modality. All learning experiences, regardless of modality, program pace/schedule, level, and setting are consistent with higher education expectations.

Standard IV: Support of the Student Experience

Across all educational experiences, settings, levels, and instructional modalities, the institution recruits and admits students whose interests, abilities, experiences, and goals are congruent with its mission and educational offerings. The institution commits to student retention, persistence, completion, and success through a coherent and effective support system sustained by qualified professionals, which enhances the quality of the learning environment, contributes to the educational experience, and fosters student success.

Standard V: Educational Effectiveness Assessment

Assessment of student learning demonstrates that the institution's students have accomplished educational goals consistent with their programs of study, degree level, the institution's mission, and appropriate expectations for institutions of higher education.

Standard VI: Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement

The institution's planning processes, resources, and structures are aligned with each other and are sufficient to fulfill its mission and goals, to continuously assess and improve its programs and services, and to respond effectively to opportunities and challenges.

Standard VII: Governance, Leadership, and Administration

The institution is governed and administered in a manner that allows it to realize its stated mission and goals in a way that effectively benefits the institution, its students, and the other constituencies it serves. Even when supported by or affiliated with governmental, corporate, religious, educational system, or other unaccredited organizations, the institution has education as its primary purpose, and it operates as an academic institution with appropriate autonomy.

As part of the self-study process, the college also must demonstrate compliance with the fifteen "Requirements of Affiliation" that may be found at the following link:

<https://www.ursinus.edu/live/files/1616-requirements-of-affiliation-excerptpdf>