**OFFICE OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS**

**Office of Assessment & Academic Program Review**

**Annual Institutional State of Assessment**

**AY 2018 – 2019**

**June 2020**

## Purpose and Introduction

The Institutional State of Assessment Report is a comprehensive analysis of UNM college/school/branch assessment narrative reports, maturity rubrics and academic unit reports. This report documents UNM's assessment story for AY 2018-2019 from the perspective of academic units and their assessment experts.

### Participants

This narrative incorporates information from almost all academic units, including the following colleges, schools, and branches:

- College of Arts and Sciences
- College of Education
- College of University Libraries and Learning Sciences
- Gallup Branch Campus
- Honor's College
- Los Alamos Branch Campus
- School of Engineering
- School of Medicine and Health Sciences
- Taos Branch Campus
- Valencia Branch Campus

State of Assessment narratives from the Anderson School of Management, School of Architecture and Planning, and The College of Fine Arts were not received by the deadline and therefore were not included in this summative report.

During the 2018/2019 academic year, colleges/schools submitted assessment documents for 59.6% of their undergraduate programs. This was a considerable decrease from the previous academic year (85.7%) due to one college's non participation and due to an update in the number of degreed programs following a meeting with the associate registrar. Branch campuses submitted assessment documents for 45.3% of their associate degree programs (maintaining their submission rate from the previous academic year). A full listing of programs and reports received can be seen in Appendix I.

## Phase I. Atlas.ti and Review of College/School/Branch Narratives

The Office of Assessment & APR (OA/APR) analyzed the State of Assessment narrative data provided by each UNM college, school, and branch using a qualitative software program (Atlas.ti). This software creates an efficient qualitative data analysis process, organizing documents with thematic notes. The OA/APR staff identified quotes, paragraphs and individual words directly related to the themes. The software is used to help generate a new document for these themes.

This qualitative analysis software requires codes in order to determine what pieces of information the OA/APR would like to retrieve from the narratives. Once the staff completed a preliminary review of assessment documents, an initial set of codes emerged. The preliminary codes were reviewed and additional codes were added to tease out greater detail. Then a secondary round of coding was conducted to explore the narratives for additional codes. Finally, all reports were exported for each individual code and reviewed. There were **8** codes in total:

- Strengths
- Challenges/weaknesses
- Graduate assessment
- The state of assessment for each college/school/branch
- Next steps for colleges/schools/branches to implement assessment changes
- Supports needed from the OA/APR
- Changes within each college/school/branch
- Meaningful assessment

It was possible for the same passage to be associated to more than one code. For example, a quotation that discussed strengths in assessing graduate assessment may be coded as both a *strength* and *graduate assessment*: "Almost every course related assessment uses a rubric to assess the outcomes of students in their cohorts. These have been strengths of … graduate and even the certificate programs."

One limitation noted in this coding process is that the coding was conducted solely by the Institutional Researcher. Another limitation is that qualitative data analysis is subjective. The OA/APR acknowledged this limitation, and attempted to alleviate any bias by coding in two rounds with extensive discussion of findings after each round. After deeply analyzing the data individually and together, the Office of Assessment & APR considers the inter-rater reliability to be sufficient to draw the conclusions provided by the themes below.

### Findings
1. Strengths

The most common **strength** described by colleges/schools/and branches is progress in their assessment processes. Units reported stronger student learning outcomes (SLOs), better measures, more in-depth assessment planning, improved communication, and a focus on closing the loop. Some programs reported improvements in assessment resulting from the transition of faculty, assessment positions or leadership that helped re-focus assessment. Additionally, programs indicated a strengthened relationship between their CARCs and unit faculty as a benefit of the assessment process. Further, programs recognized their accrediting bodies, advisory councils, and other external stakeholders as providing a critical role in assisting with their assessment cycles.

One program reported "We have a couple of new division chairs who are intent upon revising and upgrading what had gone on in program assessment in the past. We will see definite improvement and maturity in those areas." Others indicated progress: "We are doing well in creating and choosing appropriate SLOs to measure. We are making progress on using appropriate assessment measures and then reporting on that data.", and "Conversations have also helped us to develop more consistent standards to unify the variety of courses offered at each level."

2. Challenges/Weaknesses

A major **challenge/weakness** cited in the narratives was graduate level assessment. Programs reported "a lack of specificity in goals and measures" in graduate assessment; "that the programs used the same SLOs and instruments across levels of programs (Masters and PhD)"; and "graduate assessment reports tend to be limited to results in Comprehensive Exams and Dissertations."

Another **challenge** culled from the assessment reports was faculty buy-in to the assessment process. One program shared, "The process of gathering and tabulating data is overwhelming for faculty who already

have a lot on their plate." Another program stated that quality assessment is not occurring with faculty, "Some programs, for example, are still locked into the use of course grades."

The last **weakness** emerging from the narratives was a lack of closing the loop, using the information collected from the assessment process to make changes to continually improve their programs. Many units relayed similar thoughts to this statement: "We need to work on being more thoughtful and intentional about our improvement strategies."

3. Graduate Assessment

As stated above in the challenges/weaknesses category, **graduate assessment** was mentioned by programs as encountering many levels of difficulty. One college noted that the "Ph.D.degree program was not assessed" while another reported, "the culture of assessment at the grad level is less robust." Small graduate student populations were also indicated as an obstacle, "There was only one graduating student represented in three of the SLOs."

Conversely, a couple of graduate programs indicated their assessment is robust, "The overall state of assessment has been very consistent and strong for the academic year 2018-2019 given the fact that each program is accredited by an outside agency. A second program reported, "In general, the [graduate] programs are doing well with assessment."

4. The State of Assessment for each College/School/Branch

UNM colleges/schools/branches indicated they are experiencing **transition** in assessment staff and faculty. One program shared, "…roughly 50 percent of the faculty are proficient in the assessment process, 25 percent of the faculty are fairly familiar with the process, and 25 percent of the faculty require onboarding in assessment" while another stated, "…[A new Assessment Program manager] has a learning curve with the new responsibilities and timelines in addition to the responsibilities she already carries". In addition, new CARC committee members and program leadership had learning curves while transitioning into UNM assessment expectations.

Colleges/schools/branches also reported improvement in their **data collection, organization, and backup** processes. Programs stated, "…we feel we are a bit more organized as we were the previous year", "improved assessment planning with the help of a clarified assessment inventory", and "identifying more practical and feasible data collection processes via electronic surveys."

In response to programs state of assessment, they noted offering improved **support services** in order to facilitate the assessment process. An example of this includes, "Last year, program directors who did not know how to begin the assessment process were on boarded through one-on-one sit-down meetings with our assessment team. Plans were developed. This year through one-on-one sit-down meetings with department chairs… continued work on the plans that were developed and data collecting and data reporting." Additional examples include, "[One College is] Offering workshops that offer guidance on how to include students' voices and self-perceptions in the assessment process" and "Feedback from individual consultations and emails suggest that units sometimes struggle with data collection as many different people are involved."

UNM colleges/schools/branches also exhibited evidence of refining their assessment process and curriculum in order to **close the loop** more effectively. One college reported, "Departments/Programs have clearly outlined and measurable learning outcomes" while another commented on their curriculum, "…faculty culminated the three-year assessment plan by conducting a systematic and comprehensive curriculum review and "The process involved benchmarking against similar programs and analyzing job

announcements. The analysis in the context of courses resulted in a recommendation to change the curriculum structure, to develop a new course, and to revise four current courses."

As stated in the theme entitled challenges/weaknesses, colleges/schools reflected on their **graduate level assessment** as being under-developed compared to their undergraduate program assessment. In addition to the quotes cited above, programs elaborated, "…graduate assessment reports tend to be limited to results" and "the state of assessment was mixed, exemplary for the B.S. and M.A. programs and either introductory or developmental for the Ph.D. program."

5. Next Steps

A range of next steps were reported by UNM colleges/schools/branches. Some colleges/schools indicated they are **adjusting reporting deadlines** to improve reporting rates, "College-wide, this year's assessment process has resulted in one major change to the annual assessment report process. The committee reported that they felt that the College's deadline to submit a new assessment plan was too early to allow programs to review the data, review the feedback, and plan for the coming year." And "Based on all of this, the committee has decided to push the deadline for the 2020-2021 assessment plan to August 14, 2020, the last Friday before the Fall semester starts. This new deadline will allow programs to spend Spring semester reviewing the data and the feedback throughout regular program meetings, then finalize the new assessment plan as they are preparing for the Fall semester."

Some UNM colleges/schools/branches are planning to offer a **more personalized approach** to assessment by promoting workshops and enhancing individual relationships within their own programs and units. They indicated, *"*The College will continue to improve submission rate in the next academic year by means of …offering workshops that offer guidance on how to include students' voices and self-perceptions in the assessment process so data they become actors of their own learning." Also, "[One branch campus will] Continue to offer faculty workshops about SLO creation and measurement" and "The College will continue to offer a more personalized approach to Assessment by encouraging units to schedule meetings with Assessment Coordinator and Undergraduate/Graduate Committee members in Departments/Programs." Lastly, UNM colleges/schools are planning to **improve graduate level assessment**, "The faculty will get the Ph.D. assessment program back on track."

6. Supports Needed

UNM colleges/schools/branches identified support they would like from the OA/APR. One support indicated was making **good examples** available of completed assessment documents as a reference guide. Some suggestions were, "Offer easy-to-find examples of plans and reports from different programs that similar programs can use as templates in WORD format we had some issues with the PDF versions." and "Also, as we noted, some of our programs still seem unclear on what is expected in this process and what good assessment looks like. We would like to request some kind of handout or website that shows both good and bad examples of SLOs, rubrics, etc. Also, it would be great to see an example of an exemplary report to see what we should strive for."

Some colleges/schools/branches indicated they are **pleased with the support** that OA has offered. One program reported, "…Office of Assessment has already improved workshops/trainings", another stated, "[The OA/APR] created assessment tools that were easier to complete and took our feedback and allowed us to make adjustments to these documents as needed." A different program recognized the OA, "We appreciate the increase in communication and the constant willingness to help us through the assessment cycle."

Furthermore, colleges/schools/branches mentioned they would like the OA/APR to work towards **improving the data storage, organization, and retrieval processes** with the following comments, "…we would welcome a substantially and substantively improved repository. There should be one coherent and organized repository of all assessment information that alleviates the need for additional internal storage systems with which faculty are unfamiliar and which would present an additional challenge to the time and organization of CARC teams." And "As requested last year, we would still find it useful to be able to retrieve information submitted into the OGS electronic process."

7. Changes Within Each College/School/Branch

Some Colleges/schools/branches reported they are undergoing **adjustment/transformation** including, "… the number of undergraduate programs in the college has gone from 10 to 11. This is because we combined two programs," "last year, we reported 40 graduate programs, this year we have 35," and "…with the retirement of key faculty, we reorganized our department."

8. Meaningful Assessment

There were several ways in which participants indicated in their assessment reports that they felt that **assessment** was **meaningful** for their college/school/branch. Some noted the importance of using assessment processes to document their progress. Others stated that the assessment process was helpful in describing their program uniqueness and helping differentiate their programs from other programs at UNM. One program mentioned that assessment gives their college/school/branch directional clarity: "The assessment process itself helps clarify SLOs for both the university program and for individual instructors. If the SLOs are clear to begin with, instructors will be equipped to formulate assessment instruments and procedure, and will thereby have a way by which to gauge how well they taught the course, to gauge, therefore, student progress–progress as individuals and as members of a group." Along similar lines, another wrote, "The assessment process encourages faculty to discuss how different disciplines can support students in achieving similar outcomes…These conversations have also helped us to develop more consistent standards to unify the variety of courses offered at each level."

**Office Insights**

- The Office of Assessment & APR is recommending appropriate **faculty/leadership transitioning** regarding assessment within units, and the use of faculty orientations/retreats/regular program meetings to discuss assessment. Additionally, these continual activities will assist with **faculty buy-in**.
- The assessment process stresses "**closing the loop,**" that is, faculty and staff using the collected data and assessment results to make the appropriate changes needed to continuously improve. The OA/APR hosts walk in hours and meetings by appointment to help analyze/review data to assist in next steps of results use.
- Colleges/schools have reinforced **graduate level assessment** is an area that needs improvement. Often, existing graduate level assessment mirrors undergraduate assessment or is hampered by the lack of data available due to smaller student population sizes. The OA has been and will continue to work with graduate programs to improve and enhance assessment processes to generate more meaningful assessment. The OA and College of Arts and Sciences recently presented on how peer institutions assess their graduate programs and provided samples of graduate assessment reporting. This work will allow UNM to identify a more feasible and practical ways to assess graduate programs.
- To address suggestions that the OA provide **good examples** of plans and reports (along with specific elements of them), we developed an "assessment examples" section on our website

([http://assessment.unm.edu/assessment-types/academic-degree/assessment-examples.html](http://assessment.unm.edu/assessment-types/academic-degree/assessment-examples.html)). Additionally, during the annual feedback cycle, the OA identified well-produced plans and reports for respective programs/units to use as a reference.

- The OA has an established and secure data repository for all institutional assessment documents. However, the OA is not affiliated with OGS data storage, or other college/school/branch unit data archiving. We do promote an internal college/school/branch data storage system to compile and track assessment documents. This will minimize challenges with faculty and leadership transitions as well as improving year to year access to documentation.

### Phase 2. Review of a Sampling of Program Level Assessment Plans and Reports

In order to provide quality feedback for assessment reports from each college/school/branch, the Office of Assessment & APR conducts an annual review of a sample of each academic unit's documents in order to provide constructive feedback. Staff paired up to review the assessment samples, comparing comments in order to increase inter-rater reliability and to promote a comprehensive review. Reviewers recognized strengths and identified possible areas of improvement in regards to learning outcomes, assessment methods, results use, and more. The Office of Assessment & APR also sent an assessment document inventory and summary of all feedback to each college/school/branch who had participated in the 18-19 assessment cycle. The main findings from this feedback cycle identified three themes: (1) Strengths, (2) Weaknesses, and (3) Other patterns.

Particular strengths included:
- A more consistent use of current OA/APR documents (assessment plans and reports) rather than previous or independent forms
- SLOs: many programs have limited their number of SLOs, or in the case of mandated SLOs from accrediting bodies, have structured their assessment in a cycle that allows them to focus on only a few SLOs at a time
- Great examples of closing the loop are being articulated in the reporting. such as using the assessment process to inform their curriculum, instruction or overall student learning

Particular weaknesses included:
- SLOs were:
  - vague or used complex language that presented challenges in measurement later
  - pertained to what students will *do* rather than achieve or develop
  - focused on three or four outcomes in a single SLO
- Graduate level SLOs: little or no differences between the SLOs for MA/MS and PhD programs
- Closing the Loop: some programs are still not presenting clear evidence of how they plan to use their assessment results

Other patterns included:
Better overall assessment occurred when SLOs were better defined. This led to alignment between the measures and SLOs as well as resulted in being used in a positive way to improve programs. Conversely, when SLOs were vague or complex in language, it hindered the assessment process to identify, collect, and analyze data pertinent to each SLO.

## Phase 3. Review of Assessment Maturity Rubric Scores

The maturity rubric asks college/school/branch representatives to rate their unit's overall assessment maturity in four distinct dimensions:

1. Student Learning Outcomes,
2. Assessment Methods (Measures/Instruments),
3. Assessment Results, and
4. Analysis and Interpretation.

The OA/APR received maturity rubrics from 9 colleges/schools/branches in AY 2017-18 and 11 in AY2018-19.

The rubric uses a rating scale from No Evidence (0) to Exemplary Evidence (3). On average, maturity rubric scores improved across all dimensions from AY2017-18 to AY2018-19 by 0.3 points; improving from an **overall average rating of 2.3** to an **overall average rating of 2.6**. As evidenced by the figure below, the most notable improvement can be seen in the **Student Learning Outcomes** dimension, though similar improvements were also noted in the **Assessment Methods** and **Analysis and Interpretation** dimensions. The maturity rating average in the **Assessment Results** dimension remained the same between the two academic years.



Figure: On average, improvements were reported across three rubric categories from AY2017-18 to AY2018-19, with the greatest improvement in Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs).

- Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs): 2017-18 = 2.4, 2018-19 = 2.8
- Assessment Methods (Measures/Instruments): 2017-18 = 2.4, 2018-19 = 2.7
- Assessment Results: 2017-18 = 2.5, 2018-19 = 2.5
- Analysis and Interpretation: 2017-18 = 2, 2018-19 = 2.3

Average Overall 2018-19; 2.6
Average Overall 2017-18; 2.3

Legend: 2017-18 Averages (n=9) ▪ 2018-19 Averages (n=11) ▪ 2017-18 Average Overall ▪ 2018-19 Average Overall