Saint Louis University
Program Assessment Annual Reporting

It is recommended program assessment results be used to celebrate achievements of student learning as well as to identify potential areas for future curriculum improvement.

Please email this completed form as an attachment to ThatcherK@slu.edu
CAS PROGRAMS: Please email this completed form by July 1 to Donna LaVoie lavoiedj@slu.edu

1. Degree Program(s) included in this report: B.A.
2. Department: Communication
3. School/Center/College: Arts and Sciences
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Instructions: Please answer the following five questions to the best of your ability for each degree program offered within your department.

1. Summarize your assessment activities during the past year for each degree program and how this work relates to the established assessment plan (e.g. what program outcomes were assessed, faculty discussions, new survey design, data collection, revised assessment plans or learning outcomes, etc.). Please include how Madrid courses/program were involved.

In fall 2015, we discussed data from the written communication rubric gathered in the spring of 2015.

In addition, in fall 2015, we developed a new comprehensive assessment plan for our undergraduate program. This plan included nine program learning outcomes (PLOs), which we planned to assess at both the lower and upper division levels. The plan was shared with faculty on the Madrid campus and dimensions specific to the Madrid campus were added to three different rubrics. We also added a set of questions focused on theory to the exit survey for graduating seniors as a part of our perceptual measure for assessment. Faculty members on both campuses approved the program assessment plan in November 2015.

For the 2015-2016 school year, we planned to collect data for each program learning outcome at both the lower and the upper-division level. Across the fall and spring semesters, we collected data at the lower and upper division level for PLO 1a (oral communication), PLO 1c (digital communication), PLO 2a (theoretical analysis), PLO 2b (research methods), PLO 2c (message analysis), and PLO 3a (intercultural communication competence). We collected data at only the upper division level for PLO 3b (social justice and civic engagement), and we did not collect data for PLO 1b (written communication) or PLO 3c (ethical communication) at either level.
In addition, in the spring of 2016, graduating seniors on the St. Louis campus were sent an exit survey measuring their perceptions of learning. Thirty-one of 37 students completed the survey.

2. Describe specific assessment findings related to the learning outcomes assessed for each degree program, including any pertinent context surrounding the findings. Please include the learning outcomes themselves. (e.g. Our goal was that 75% of students performed at the “proficient” level of competency in problem solving, using a new scoring rubric. 81% of students performed at the “proficient” level in problem solving, exceeding our expectations.) Do not include student-level data. Data included in this report should be in aggregate. Please include how Madrid courses/program were involved.

Although assessment data collected from a single section of a course does not provide a representative sample of our students for making claims about student learning, the data gathered do allow us to effectively evaluate our assessment plan and identify ways to improve our process. Data came from classes on both the St. Louis and the Madrid campuses. Our conversations about how to improve the process will include faculty from both campuses.

There are several places where we are missing data (either because data were not collected on a specific outcome at a specific level or because some dimensions of the rubric did not apply to the particular artifact). Missing data demonstrate the need to ensure a more effective data collection system (making sure that we are seeking data from faculty and that faculty are able to provide the data). Faculty who did not complete rubrics as requested raised questions regarding process (e.g., protecting the anonymity of students) and/or noted that the rubrics would not apply to the artifact from their classes. A discussion about our curriculum mapping, then, will be an important part of our analysis of assessment data from this year. Missing data when rubrics were applied also raise some important questions for us to consider regarding the match between our rubrics and our artifacts (e.g., do we need to simplify the rubric and/or do we need to find more appropriate artifacts). This question addresses both curriculum mapping and measurement choices and will be a topic of discussion this fall as well.

The data indicated that there were relatively few program majors in some of our lower division classes (specifically, CMM 1000 Human Communication and Culture; CMM 1200 Public Speaking). Many students who might later become communication majors typically have not declared the major when they are taking these 1000-level classes. In addition, data suggest that faculty members are not necessarily applying rubrics in similar ways to lower and upper division courses. This suggests we need to revisit our plan to use lower-level course data. It may be more effective and efficient to focus specifically on data from 3000 and 4000-level classes.

Finally, some variations in how faculty applied the rubrics indicate a need for more effective faculty training and instructions. In the fall, we will seek additional faculty input about this.

*Please attach any tables, graphics, or charts to the end of this report.*

3. Describe how assessment feedback has been provided to students, faculty, and staff. (e.g. report for faculty, executive summary for the dean, web page for students, alumni newsletter, discussion with students in class or club event, etc.)

The data we gathered for assessment this year will be shared with faculty on both the St. Louis and
Madrid campuses along with some specific observations about process and recommendations for further discussion. Specific topics that we will be discussing this fall include 1) evaluation of how faculty used the rubrics and whether or not more training is necessary to ensure measurement consistency and 2) a discussion about curriculum mapping to identify more effectively where we will find artifacts to assess particular outcomes and/or whether or not other data collection measures will need to be used. Faculty will be invited to add additional topics for reflection as we work to revise and improve our process.

Because the central focus this year is on lessons learned about the process of assessment, our final conclusions will be shared with interested stakeholders in the form of a revised assessment plan this fall.

4. In what ways have you used assessment findings to celebrate student achievements and/or to improve the curriculum this past year? (e.g. prizes to students, hosting student parties, changes to curriculum, student projects, learning goals, assessment strategies, etc.)

Based upon the assessment findings from last year’s focus on PLO 1B (written communication), faculty suggested that having students do more frequent, smaller writing assignments that require the incorporation of quality academic research might help improve student learning in the areas of Genre and Disciplinary Conventions and Control and Syntax of Mechanics. For those classes that assign large papers turned in at the end of a semester, doing so does not allow for many of the practices faculty suggest for improved writing: peer evaluation, professor feedback, editing, writing in drafts, and so on. These projects might be broken up into smaller parts that require revision before integrating them into the final paper. For those classes that already assign a number of small papers, creating opportunities for revision based upon feedback might be one way to improve student writing on these dimensions.

5. Describe any changes to your assessment plans, or any challenges or educational experiences with the assessment process this past year that you would like to share.

Given initial observations from the comprehensive data collection, it is likely that we will make the following changes to our assessment plans (although these conclusions may change after our faculty conversations):

1) eliminate the lower-level course assessment and focus only on 3000/4000 level courses
2) revise our curriculum mapping this fall to more effectively identify artifacts for analysis

It is also possible that we may decide we need to modify our rubrics.

Please submit any revised/updated assessment plans to the University Assessment Coordinator along with this report.