

August 26, 2015

To: Peter March, Executive Dean
School of Arts and Sciences

Michael Beals, Vice Dean for Undergraduate Education
School of Arts and Sciences

Susan Lawrence, Dean of Educational Initiatives and Curriculum
School of Arts and Sciences

Carolyn Moehling, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Education
School of Arts and Sciences

From: Gary Gigliotti
Chair, Executive Council on Assessment

Re: Review of the School of Arts and Sciences annual assessment report,
July 2015

Thank you for your 2015 annual assessment report. The Executive Council on Assessment (ECA) has reviewed the both the Core Curriculum report and the Annual Assessment Report of the School of Arts and Sciences (SAS) and our evaluation of your 2015 work in these crucial areas are forwarded with this letter.

The ECA was thinks highly of the assessment process in SAS, which has engendered a true culture of evidence-based assessment throughout the school. This is obviously no easy task in such a large and diverse academic environment. The dedication of time and resources by SAS is exemplary, and the resulting assessment structure and the assessment activities it supports are coherent, sustainable, active and constantly improving.

The two attached narrative responses comment in detail on the assessment process and various assessment activities, and make some suggestions for next year. But, I would like to add another observation. It is quite evident to me, from reading the reports of other schools, that the high standards of assessment in the Core Curriculum and in SAS departments, and the commitment to assessment made by SAS, have provided a model for others that has contributed to a flowering of evidence based assessment across New Brunswick. Everyone in New Brunswick has benefited from the hard and excellent work done in SAS. We are confident that work will continue, and SAS will continue to be the leader in learning outcome assessment throughout New Brunswick.



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Thank you for your commitment, your dedication, and your hard work in this area.

Please write to me at gary.gigliotti@ctaar.rutgers.edu or call my office at (848) 932-7466 with any questions you may have.

Gary A. Gigliotti
Associate VP Academic Affairs, Teaching and Assessment
Professor of Economics

Executive Council on Assessment
Narrative responses to the spring 2015 assessment report submitted by:

School of Arts & Sciences

Learning Goals: Meets current ECA standards

All 42 SAS departments and undergraduates programs have published programmatic learning goals on SAS and department web pages and in the University Catalog. SAS reports that all 42 of its departments' major and minor program learning goals are appropriately aligned with SAS (core curriculum) and University goals and that they are appropriately rigorous. All departments are actively engaged in regular direct assessment of student learning outcomes or are working together as a faculty to develop and implement such plans. All departments have filed AY2014-15 assessment reports.

Course Syllabi: Meets current ECA standards

According to the Assessment Report, SAS course syllabi "overwhelmingly" include appropriate learning goals and students have access to syllabi or course synopses before they register. 37 of 42 programs have very good/exemplary learning goals in their course syllabi and the most syllabi identify where learning goals are met.

Assessment plan structure and process: Meets current ECA standards

SAS clearly has developed a robust, sustainable and effective assessment plan and process, supported by a Dean for Educational Initiatives and the Curriculum, an Associate Dean of Undergraduate Education, and an Assistant Dean for Assessment. An appendix summarizing progress in program assessment reports shows considerable growth in the initial development period between AY2009-10 and 2011-12. Since then, the departments have successfully maintained their respective assessment programs. Reports indicate a slight drop from 2013-14 to 2014-15 in the number of departments reporting their assessment plans/schedule for "going forward."

Assessment Tools and Measures: Making reasonable progress

The Assessment Report indicates that departments are making very good progress in developing direct, appropriate, and reliable assessment tools and measures that can be used for program improvement. Seventeen departments were rated as "exemplary" on all of these criteria. SAS is continuing to work with departments to refine these tools and measures.

Benchmark/Standards: Making reasonable progress

SAS departments continue to make progress in the use of benchmarks that incorporate rigorous standards for student achievement. About one-third of the departments are rated "exemplary" in this category, and SAS sees further opportunities for improvement. No specific information is provided about benchmarks/standards used, and report does not indicate how benchmarks are developed and how standards are set.

Assessment Implementation and Results: Making reasonable progress.

SAS departments were very active in conducting and reporting direct assessments of student learning outcomes. Specific assessment results were included in 38 of the 42 annual reports, the same number as last year.

Closing the Loop Activities: Meets current ECA standards

Report indicates that 86% of the departmental assessment reports included descriptions of curricular and/or assessment improvements they have made, or will make, in light of what they learned from their assessment results. The report is to be commended for providing information on the specific activities departments are using to “close the loop:” 39 departments reported on specific changes they have made, or are planning to make, based on their assessment data. Importantly, the report includes information on “post-closing the loop assessments”: evidence of improved student learning based on implemented changes. An appendix details evidence of improvements in student achievement of learning goals in response to previous CLO activities made in response to previous years’ assessment data in six departments. Since 2009-2010, 8 SAS departments have focused or made plans to focus attention on the review and revision of their learning goals in light of previous assessment results. These CLO and maintenance/updating activities represent clear evidence that the assessment process is well established and fully integrated into program planning at SAS and that the process has led to curricular and/or pedagogical changes that have demonstrably improved student learning. SAS is to be strongly commended on this achievement.

General Comments:

SAS has developed a complex and highly successful assessment program, with strong and consistent oversight and accountability for activities in each of its departments. All departments are not at the same level of quality with respect to their assessment efforts, but there is evidence of continuing progress. The commitment of adequate resources to this endeavor is critical. With a dean for educational initiatives and the core curriculum and an assistant dean for assessment, the School has been successful in supporting faculty efforts to build quality in the assessment of learning outcomes, programs, and core curricula. Also impressive is the creation and maintenance of an active, effective, school-wide committee on assessment that provides direct oversight, feedback, and guidance to academic departments on their assessment initiatives. Over the last six years, SAS has made remarkable progress in development of assessment tools, collecting and disseminating results, and using these results to improve programs. SAS is to be commended for the breadth and depth of its assessment initiatives. In light of a slight reduction this year in the number of departments reporting plans for using their assessment results, it will be very important to monitor all units to maintain momentum and ensure that a robust cyclical assessment process continues. SAS is to be commended for creating a culture of assessment and for its support of a systematic, evidence-based, assessment plan, rigorously applied across the School.

Summative Evaluation: Exemplary program, SAS meets current ECA standards