

September 7, 2016

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

Susan Lawrence, Vice Dean for Undergraduate Education  
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 and the  
Core Curriculum assessment report 2016.

Thank you for your 2016 annual assessment reports. 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 Narrative Responses to these two reports are forwarded with this letter.

The two attached Narrative Responses are laudatory, and justly so. The reviewers note that the assessment programs in SAS, both for the Core Curriculum and for the programs and departments within SAS, are exemplary. In quality, depth and breadth, nothing compares to them in the University.

As I noted last year, it is striking that SAS has created a coherent, sustainable and active assessment culture in the face of such diversity and difference in disciplines and programs. It is striking, too, that there is such depth of faculty involvement in assessment throughout the Core Curriculum and in the departments themselves.

And again this year, I must point out that the leadership shown by SAS in program assessment has been a beacon for other schools within the institution to find their way to create meaningful assessment plans and methods.

Thank you for your commitment, your dedication, your hard work, and your leadership in this area. We are confident that SAS will continue to be the leader in learning outcome assessment throughout New Brunswick and in the University.

Please write to me at [gary.gigliotti@ctaar.rutgers.edu](mailto: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 Response to the 2016 Assessment Report**

**Submitted by: School of Arts and Sciences**

**Learning Goals:** Meets Current ECA Standards

All 42 SAS departments and undergraduate 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. Impressively, all departments have filed AY2015-16 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. Thirty-seven of 42 programs have very good/exemplary learning goals in their course syllabi, although only about half of those identify where or how the 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. It can be used as an exemplar for other assessment efforts because it “insures that all departments review their plans each year” and because SAS is able to manage annual assessment reviews in all of its departments. As indicated in Appendix C, this year, SAS has made great strides in increasing the number of programs that are making “very good” to “exemplary” progress in the efficiency and sustainability of their assessment efforts. There was a slippage in the number of programs deemed “effective” in their assessment efforts, however. Almost a quarter of departments (14) are judged to be using “best practices” on all four criteria in this category.

**Assessment Tools and Measures:** Meets Current ECA Standards

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. Thirteen departments were rated as “exemplary” on all of these criteria, a slight decrease from last year, yet still compelling. SAS is continuing to work with departments to refine these tools and measures.

### **Assessment Implementation and Results: Meets Current ECA Standards**

All 42 SAS departments filed comprehensive assessment reports, covering 94.7% of the total enrollments in SAS courses. These reports were reviewed by the Office of Undergraduate Education and will be audited by a school-wide faculty-based committee in fall 2016. All departments engage in annual reviews of assessment plans, structures, and processes. Thirty-five departments are commended for direct assessment measures of at least one of the primary student learning goals. SAS departments particularly excelled in conducting and reporting direct assessments of student learning outcomes.

### **Closing the Loop Activities: Meets Current ECA Standards**

Most SAS departments are making very good progress in using data derived from assessment processes to close the loop and improve programs. All departments included information in their assessment reports about analysis and review of assessment reports; more than half (24) made very good progress in implementing evidence-based decisions for their programs. The report provides a full list of the changes SAS departments have made or are planning to make to improve student learning – by addressing “concerns revealed by their assessment data.” Twenty-eight departments reported evidence of improvement from closing the loop activities, while most of the others are at earlier stages of the process. The report notes, however, that the rate of progress has slowed in 6 of these departments and the SAS Assessment Committee will follow up. Importantly, the School is responsive to requests for better data and technological tools as well as has more training and administrative support.

### **Maintenance/Updating Process: Meets Current ECA Standards**

The SAS Office of Undergraduate Education is to be commended for its ongoing work with departments as the assessment process matures within the School. While it would be premature to expect that most departments would have updated learning goals, it is noteworthy that 14 departments are using best practices in this area. Eight departments have responded to prior assessment results, focused attention on program learning goals, and made changes in their standards.

### **General Comments: Meets Current ECA Standards**

SAS is to be commended for successfully engaging all of its departments in a very successful assessment program; all 42 departmental reports document faculty engagement in departmental reporting and in school-wide assessment work. The School has developed useful assessment tools, collects and disseminates results, and uses results to improve programs. Departments have collaborated to develop some innovative assessment programs, such as the evaluation of introductory courses used in related disciplines. The TRIAD coalition (Transformation using Research-based Instructional Practices, Assessment, and Dissemination), which fosters integration in STEM coursework, provides another excellent example. The Office of Undergraduate Education has created a culture of assessment that

fosters both individual departmental assessments and larger, more general discussions of educational challenges across the school. Over the next year the School should continue to focus on “closing the loop” using evidence derived from assessment processes and on faculty engagement in departmental and school-wide issues of program improvement.

**Summative Evaluation:** Exemplary Program, Meets Current ECA standards