



INNOVATION FOR A HEALTHIER PLANET

January 10, 2019

c/o Jennifer Mandel
University Assessment Committee (UAC)
UNE

Re: Response to 2017-18 Assessment Report

Dear UAC:

The purpose of this letter is to provide a formal response from my office to your UAC Report on the Status of Assessment 2017-18 at UNE. First, I want to commend you all for the very thorough work represented in this report and the diligence with which you individually and collectively contribute to a culture of assessment at UNE. Further, I want to thank by extension the programs and individuals at UNE on which you are reporting. It is quite clear that there is, in fact, a robust culture of academic assessment at UNE, and that this culture has been growing and strengthening progressively over the past several years due to the seriousness with which faculty, academic staff and their programs take assessment and the various program-level accreditation processes that include assessment here at UNE. This is in large measure a result of the work that the UAC has done in collaboration with programs.

The report itself is very comprehensive, and I have no specific comments or questions about the body of the report. Outlined below are my responses to your Final Recommendations as detailed in the submitted report.

Recommendation 1.1. I agree overall with this recommendation to continue expanding assessment to other co-curricular units where such assessment makes sense. My only suggested revision is to exclude the Registrar from this list at this time. While their work is crucial to the university, it is highly technical and “back of the house” in most ways, not really student-facing per se other than individual transactions with students regarding their record, and so I believe it would be a real stretch for them to develop learning outcomes or the other key elements of formal assessment.

Recommendation 1.2. I agree with this recommendation. My office will continue to support this improvement and expansion of web pages and web-accessed resources in any way we can, and of course this site is now part of the Provost’s Office site with the movement of Assessment from Institutional Research to my office.

Recommendation 1.3. I agree with this recommendation. This is part of the UAC’s own continual improvement plan and shows its flexibility and responsiveness to the assessment community to best serve them in performing and completing their assessments.

Recommendation 2.1. I agree with this recommendation. As you know, UNE is working hard to improve its database of alums as well as better connecting them to the university in various ways, and part of this strategy includes regular communication and surveys to also glean as much as we can from them to help us all improve UNE and its academic programs.

Recommendation 2.2. I agree with this overall recommendation. But as we discussed, it should be noted that a working group was actually established last year out of the Provost’s Office to evaluate the scope and scale of student surveys as well as surveys to faculty, staff, and the entire UNE community. Their findings and

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recommendations, in short, are as follows: first, there are probably far too many individual student surveys, and they are both repetitive in many cases and not well integrated with each other. And so an effort to combine these and ask a more comprehensive set of questions in a smaller set of surveys would be prudent. This would greatly improve the quality and response rate of these surveys, and also minimize survey fatigue. Second, many units doing surveys are not aware of the tools we have for surveys within Institutional Research, and so they are doing these ad hoc at the unit level with SurveyMonkey and other less robust and more expensive platforms, and so having all surveys go through IR – for quality control, for standardization with one platform, and to centrally capture and retain survey results – would greatly improve institutional effectiveness in the surveys we perform. Third, a calendar of surveys, also centrally coordinated, would ensure that two or more surveys do not go out at the same time and that surveys are both staggered over the year and regularized so that the target groups can anticipate them and improve responsiveness. And as per your recommendation, I also agree that other, non-survey measures should also be employed rather than relying so heavily on surveys as the major assessment tool.

Recommendation 2.3 and its sub-recommendations. I agree with this set of recommendations. Several concrete steps are already being taken that will move this recommendation forward. We are in the process of hiring a full-time professional staff director for CETL, who will then oversee the hiring of several additional staff who can assist with many of the areas you outlined including instructional design, evaluation, pedagogy and the like. Moving accreditation and assessment from IR to the Provost's Office has also provided additional focus and support for these activities. Upgrading our EAB advising system, and beginning a process to upgrade our LMS platform will also provide specific tools and other support for assessment, data gathering and analysis, and integration of learning outcomes.

Recommendation 2.4. I agree with this recommendation. However, while each program asked for support in different ways, I would suggest that the overall theme is more important than the specific tools that were requested. Some programs asked for additional staff support, some for software tools, some for databases and data analysis, etc. but all are basically asking for technical support, and as addressed above in my response to Recommendation 2.3, we are addressing these needs at the enterprise level with both upgraded platforms such as EAB and LMS, as well as personnel support through CETL, the Assessment Office of the Provost, and other mechanisms. We have also improved the organization and coordination of the UFA technology committee with the central ATAC committee, and the Provost's Council, University Council and University Faculty Assembly are robust forums where specific concerns, needs and recommendations can continue to be integrated from individual units across the university.

Thank you again for your work last year and for producing this excellent report and set of recommendations. I greatly look forward to working with you and with our broader community of colleagues at UNE on building and sustaining a culture of assessment that directly impacts best practices and improves overall student success.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JH', with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Joshua W. Hamilton Ph.D.
Provost & Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs