

# *Report on the Status of Assessment & Quality of Educational Effectiveness at the University, For the 2020-2021 Academic Year*

Submitted Fall 2021

Prepared by: Jennifer Mandel, Ph.D., Associate Director of Assessment, Office of the Provost

With input from the [University Assessment Committee](#): Stine Brown, Kelly Duarte, Stacey Dubois, Marc Ebenfield, Stephanie Fraone, Nicole Kimmes, Shane Long, Wallace Marsh, Linda Morrison, Ryan M. Smith, Barb Swartzlander, and Sally McCormack Tutt

And ex officio members: Karen Pardue, Ph.D., RN, CNE, FNAP, ANEF, Provost and Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs, and Michael Sheldon, PT, Ph.D., Associate Provost for Academic Affairs



INNOVATION FOR A HEALTHIER PLANET

---

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

### Report

Report Summary .....	1
I. Introduction .....	1
II. Follow-Up on Last Year's Recommendations .....	3
III. Findings from the AY 2020-21 Assessment Reports .....	6
A. Successes, Challenges, and Unexpected Opportunities and Outcomes in Student Learning.....	6
B. Initiatives to further Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and a Sense of Belonging .....	15
C. Key Actions Programs and Co-Curricular Units Plan to Take.....	17
IV. Key Findings and Recommendations .....	18
References.....	20

### Appendices

A. Colleges' and Divisions' Assessment Activities, AY 2020-21 .....	21
B. Update on Three-Year New Program Reviews and Periodic Program Reviews .....	33

# Report Summary

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic and its national and global effects, the University of New England (UNE) responded with agility and nimbleness by rising to the challenges, adjusting its teaching, learning, and assessment practices, and making the most of the unexpected opportunities to further student success. The pandemic necessitated significant time, energy, and resources to keep the University community safe. Despite this diversion of attention to pandemic-related operations, the University Assessment Committee (UAC) only saw a slight decrease in academic program and co-curricular reports in AY 2020-21. Moreover, the majority of programs and co-curricular units incorporated unique and creative methods into their work that resulted in strong evidence of students meeting or exceeding the AY 2020-21 learning outcomes. Many programs and co-curricular units replaced traditional teaching practices with, or adding to traditional teaching practices, more experiential methods and/or online tools. Co-curricular units incorporated remote, hybrid, and small group activities into their programming that diversified student representation and increased student participation. Programs and colleges, and co-curricular units and divisions also increased discussions and took noteworthy steps toward improving diversity, equity, inclusion, and a sense of belonging. Programs and co-curricular units continue to make plans and take data-informed actions to further assessment and student learning.

## I. Introduction

This *Report on the Status of Assessment & Quality of Educational Effectiveness at the University*, for the 2020-2021 Academic Year, marks the return of the [University Assessment Committee's \(UAC\) regular reporting](#) of annual program, co-curricular, college, and division assessment reports. In academic year (AY) 2019-20, the UAC replaced collecting those annual assessment reports with surveying students, faculty, and professional staff on their experiences in the COVID-19 pandemic. In AY 2020-21, the UAC returned to collecting annual program, co-curricular, college, and division assessment reports, and using the data from those reports to write this report.

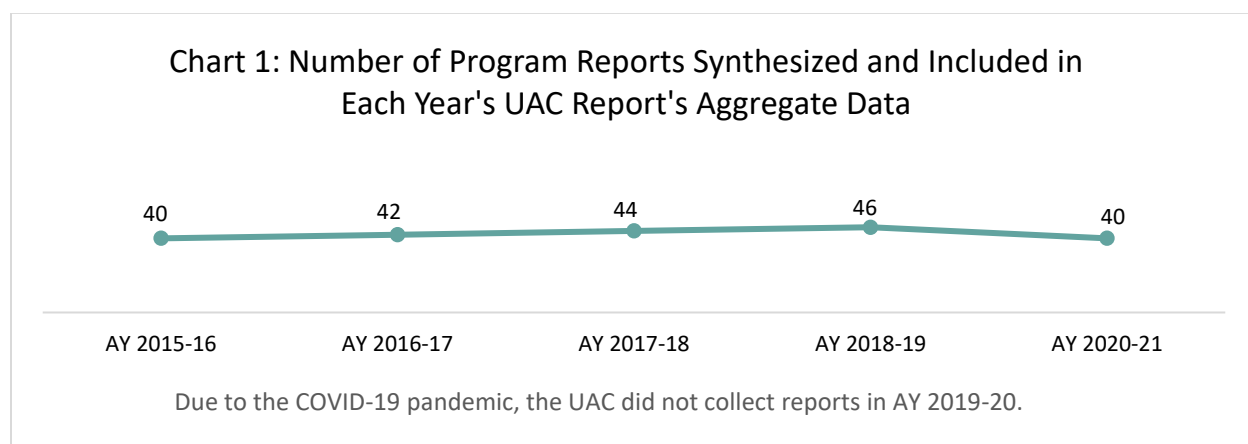
Amid highly uncertain times, when the University had to swiftly shift to fully remote operations in mid-spring 2020 and then modify its in-person classes to the cohort and hybrid models (learning partly in person and partly online) in AY 2020-21, the UAC collected survey data to understand the ways in which to best support students and their education. The UAC used its spring and summer 2020 survey data to write its [report on AY 2019-20](#), and then its fall 2020 survey data to write an executive summary and compare those data. Interestingly, data from the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment's (NILOA) June 2020 survey found that 35% of respondents representing universities across the country modified assessment report deadlines, and 29% modified assessment reporting processes and/or questions ([Jankowski, 2020, p. 6](#)). While less than 1% reported that assessment at their institution completely stopped, Natasha Jankowski at NILOA found “ongoing concern raised by those in the field...whether assessment will remain a priority” (p. 21). UNE, however, ensured assessment remained central to its operations.

Programs, co-curricular units, colleges, and divisions submitted their annual AY 2020-21 assessment reports amid a particular set of challenges that, for many, certainly affected their

assessment practices. For one, as the pandemic persisted, programs ran virtual and hybrid courses, while co-curricular units held remote and/or in-person programming (in-person events were modified for safety, e.g. participants wore masks in one-on-one trainings and small group activities). Modifying the format of courses and programs required significant personnel resources, which sometimes detracted from their usual assessment data collection and analysis efforts.

Institutional changes likewise affected assessment data collection and analysis. For example, the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) reorganization, which was planned before the pandemic and implemented in AY 2020-21, affected some of its programs' assessment practices. As CAS merged its thirteen academic departments into [six schools](#), its newly appointed Academic Directors set out to affirm and, in some cases, reestablish their assessment practices. Also, since AY 2019-20, the interdisciplinary Curriculum Task Force (CTF), in collaboration with the CAS and Westbrook College of Health Professions (WCHP) Dean's offices and the Provost's office, has led a three-phase project to restructure and unify the undergraduate general education, and align it with the University of New England's (UNE) 2018-23 strategic plan, [Our World, Our Future](#). In AY 2020-21, the CTF drafted and received faculty endorsement for the new general education pillars and learning outcomes. Among its next charges in its third phase, which is taking place in AY 2021-22, the CTF is drafting a model structure for the general education curriculum and creating a general education assessment process. (For more on CAS's work, see Appendix A, CAS.)

Since its report on AY 2015-16, when it began systematically quantifying and synthesizing the annual assessment reports' data, and until AY 2018-19 (before the pandemic), the UAC saw a noteworthy incremental increase in the number of reports submitted and thus the number it has synthesized. Submitted program reports rose from 53 in AY 2015-16 to 54 in AY 2016-17 to 55 in AY 2017-18 to 57 in AY 2018-19. In those years, the UAC excluded from the aggregate data the reports from new programs that had yet to collect data, imminently phased out programs, and the eleven CAS Core Curriculum Areas (instead, including the CAS Core Summary report as representative). Accordingly, the number of program reports the UAC synthesized increased from 40 in AY 2015-16 to 42 in AY 2016-17 to 44 in AY 2017-18 to 46 in AY 2018-19 (Chart 1).



Submitted co-curricular reports also remarkably increased from one in AY 2015-16 to seven in AY 2016-17 to nine in AY 2017-18 to fourteen in AY 2018-19 (Chart 2).

Chart 2: Number of Co-Curricular Unit Reports Received, Synthesized, and Included in Each Year's UAC Report's Aggregate Data



Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the UAC did not collect reports in AY 2019-20.

By and large, the increase in reports represents the University's deepened growth and engagement in assessment. In its [report on AY 2018-19](#), for instance, the UAC noted that the University has steadily developed a robust culture of assessment that runs on a well-established annual assessment cycle (see pp. 1, 4, and 10). In part, the number of reports increased because, over the years, some academic departments and co-curricular offices further apportioned their reporting and had individual programs and units submit separate reports. In other words, the number of reports increased partly because programs and units that had already been engaged in assessment had begun to submit their own separate report.

As Charts 1 and 2 illustrate, in AY 2020-21, the number of submitted reports slightly decreased for various reasons. This UAC report uses aggregate data from the 40 program assessment reports and 9 co-curricular assessment reports that the UAC received and synthesized this year. Pandemic-related challenges and institutional changes, including competing priorities and interests, leadership transitions, program and organizational restructuring, and staffing shortages, partly affected the 13% decrease in program reports and 36% decrease in co-curricular reports.

But despite these challenges, academic programs, co-curricular units, colleges, and divisions continued to assess student learning albeit, in some instances, using different processes. In the CAS reorganization that merged thirteen departments into six schools, for example, some schools decided to report all of their programs' assessment data, findings, and actions in one single report rather than submit a report for each program. Also, amid the CTF's second (AY 2020-21) and third (AY 2021-22) phases of the general education restructure and realignment, the established CAS Core Curriculum has concurrently streamlined its established assessment process by focusing on collecting and analyzing data and sample student work of one Core learning outcome each year. Thus the decrease in reports is also partly an artifact of organizational restructuring rather than an actual decrease in unit participation.

## II. Follow-up on Last Year's Recommendations

Based on last year's data and the discussions surrounding the [UAC's report on AY 2019-20](#), the UAC put forth the following goals for itself, and took the following actions:

- 1.1. Continuing its efforts from the past three years, the UAC plans to support more university-wide, student-facing, and supporting units to define co-curricular learning outcomes and assess student learning and programmatic effectiveness.

Actions Taken: The UAC continued to take steps toward further developing co-curricular student learning assessment. (1) The Division of Student Affairs continued to represent co-curricular education on the UAC and contribute to co-curricular student learning assessment with an interim representative and, beginning in fall 2021 the new Assistant Dean of Students. (2) While the UAC had to pause its plans for offering a workshop on co-curricular student learning assessment in spring 2020, it has now scheduled the event, this time remotely, for February 2022. In this three-hour workshop, the invited speaker will discuss tips for establishing a strong and sustainable assessment process for co-curricular student learning. The UAC will continue to work toward this goal in the coming years (Recommendation 1).

- 1.2. Add more resources to the “Assessment Resources” web page for University academic programs, co-curricular units, colleges, and divisions to draw on and further develop their assessment processes, including a resource for establishing benchmarks.

Actions Taken: The Assessment Office postponed its efforts in developing more resources for the UAC web page. It has resumed these plans in AY 2021-22 (Recommendation 2).

- 1.3. The UAC also plans to continue updating its handbook, underlining its charge as a resource for assessment support.

Actions Taken: The UAC continues to fit in its work on updating its handbook periodically during its meetings. The Assessment Office has spent time drafting updates in the handbook, and the committee has brainstormed ideas for its mission, vision, and core values. With an understanding that this project entails a significant time commitment, the UAC will continue its work on updating the handbook throughout AY 2021-22 (Recommendation 3).

- 1.4. Include demographic questions (e.g. gender, race/ethnicity, age group, college, student year in school, and faculty and professional staff full- or part-time status) to better ascertain the specific challenges of particular groups and the support they need to succeed.

Actions Taken: At the end of the fall 2020 semester, the UAC, in collaboration with the Office of Institutional Research & Data Analytics (OIRDA) and the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL), administered another survey to the undergraduate and graduate/professional student populations. Following its recommendation, in the survey the UAC included demographic questions and then disaggregated and analyzed the data based on those categories. The UAC distributed those findings in an executive summary that highlights student experiences in the fall 2020 semester based on their race/ethnicity, gender, and year in school; compares the spring, summer, and fall 2020 data; puts forth key takeaways; and includes many charts to illustrate those data and takeaways.

Finally, in its report on AY 2019-20, the UAC made the following four other recommendations to the University that were based on the 2020 survey data.

- 2.1. To advance student learning in and outside the classroom, survey data surfaced several of the following pedagogical and student support measures. (a) Both undergraduate and graduate student data highlight the value of faculty support, flexibility, and availability. (b) Synchronous meetings, using Zoom and other technologies, provide undergraduate students with campus connections, and a structure to their daily schedule. (c) Both undergraduate and graduate student data also highlight the value of faculty recorded and pre-recorded course material. (d) Both undergraduate and graduate student data reveal the need for on-campus resources, activities, and interactions. Many graduate students in particular stressed their appreciation for the hybrid model that included in-person learning. (e) Graduate student and professional staff data also reveal the need for more transparency on University decisions.

Updates: While the University has resumed in-person, on-campus operations in AY 2021-22, these recommendations remain relevant as related to the University's strategic goals for in-person, hybrid, and online teaching and learning. For example, the data support the need for ongoing faculty support and flexibility, recorded course materials, campus connections and interactions, and continued transparency, regardless of course delivery methodology.

- 2.2. Increase faculty and professional staff engagement with some of the UNE resources, such as the Continuity Technology Resource website, ITS webinars, CETL webinars, and Library resources, that they did not fully utilize in the shift to emergency remote learning.
- 2.3. Further support students on navigating the various technologies, and communicating with them about which technologies they need to use. Ultimately, most faculty respondents relied on Zoom and Blackboard for remote instruction, but they used other tools, depending on their pedagogical and discipline-specific needs. On the student survey, 35% of all UG students selected "unclear expectations around which technologies I am required to use."
- 2.4. Adopt more advanced technologies to facilitate communication and University operations (e.g. digital processing systems). Of the top two responses to the open-ended question, what professional staff would do differently, 23% of those who responded (n=44) reported better or more effective communication, and 11% mentioned the need for UNE to acquire more advanced technologies (e.g. digital processing).

Updates: (1) CETL and ITS continue to collaborate on providing faculty development on UNE's resources that, in turn, help students also navigate those technologies. For example, when the University adopted Brightspace as its learning management system (LMS) in 2021, CETL and ITS offered numerous in-person and remote drop-in sessions and workshops, developed numerous resources, and emailed tips and lessons learned throughout the year to get started on the software, migrate courses, and make the most of Brightspace's teaching and learning functionalities. (2) Library Services continues to add to its numerous in-person and remote resources. As discussed below, in AY 2020-21, Library Services created the [Community, Equity, and Diversity Library Resource Initiative \(CEDLRI\)](#) web pages.

### **III. Findings from the AY 2020-21 Assessment Reports**

#### **A. Successes, Challenges, and Unexpected Opportunities and Outcomes in Student Learning**

Teaching and learning have unequivocally been altered, in both small and large ways, by the global pandemic. The UAC's fall 2020 survey revealed 65% of undergraduate students and 48% of graduate/professional students having difficulty focusing particularly on their remote learning activities. Moreover, the #MeToo and Black Lives Matter movements have continued to resonate with the University community. Academic programs and colleges, and co-curricular units and divisions, in their AY 2020-21 annual assessment reports, make it clear that the global and national developments have compelled them to increase curricular, co-curricular, and extracurricular student support structures and modify those supports for the in-person, hybrid, and remote learning formats. The University community faced significant challenges, and yet, at the same time, through its resilience and agility, welcomed unexpected opportunities that brought about unique and creative ways to support and advance student learning.

#### **1. Academic Programs and Colleges**

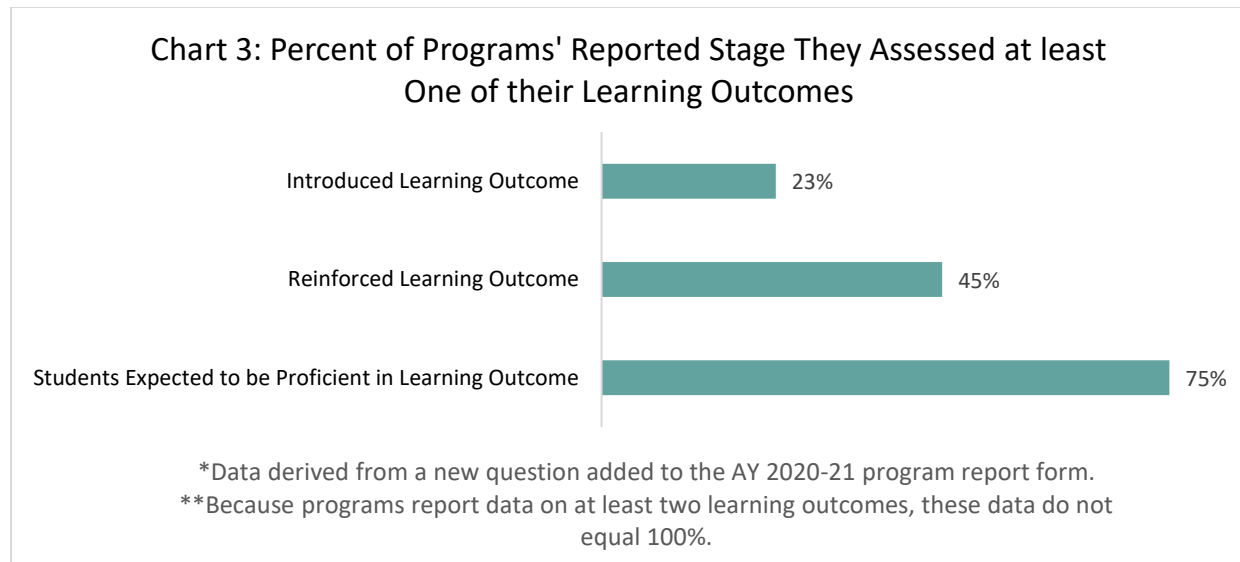
##### **a. Student Successes**

By and large, programs reported strong evidence of student success in AY 2020-21. More specifically, 80% of programs reported meeting or exceeding the benchmark of at least one of their student learning outcomes in AY 2020-21, and 30% reported missing the benchmark of at least one of their student learning outcomes the same year. The UAC has been collecting these data for several years, and while it cannot make apples-to-apples comparisons with the longitudinal data, it has made some inferences.

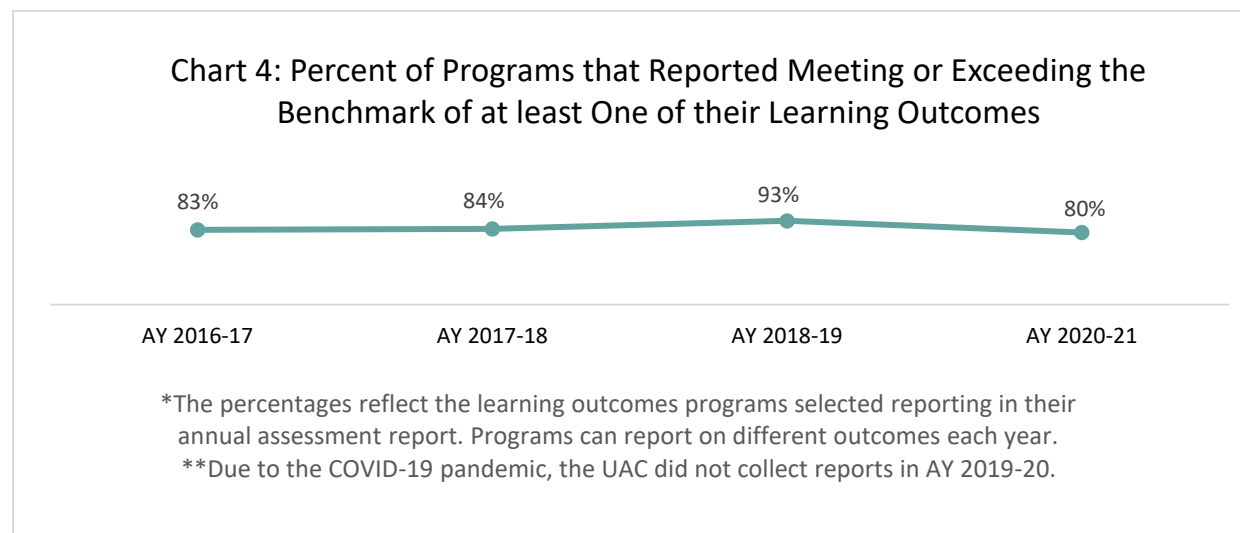
The UAC asks programs to report on at least two learning outcomes every year, but programs can choose to report on different ones each year. Moreover, some programs (e.g., 28% in AY 2020-21) reported meeting or exceeding the benchmark of at least one learning outcome, and missing the benchmark of at least one other learning outcome. Thus the combined data for each academic year do not equal 100%. However, these data provide the UAC and the University at large a way in which to monitor and assess university-wide assessment as a whole, and provide programs with feedback to advance their assessment process.

In its [report on AY 2018-19](#), in response to the data showing that 93% of programs reported meeting or exceeding the benchmark of at least one of their learning outcomes, for instance, the UAC suggested programs consider raising benchmarks of the learning outcomes they have met and reporting on the learning outcomes that they have not met without fear of facing punitive measures (p. 6). Following the discussion of those data at the UAC's university-wide presentation in November 2019, colleges relayed the message to their programs.

Also, to better understand these data, the UAC added a question on the AY 2020-21 report form asking programs the stage in which they assessed student learning on each of their reported learning outcomes (i.e. introduced the learning outcome, reinforced the learning outcome, or students were expected to be proficient in the learning outcome). Of the program reports, 23% reported data on a learning outcome they introduced, 45% reported data on a learning outcome they reinforced, and 75% reported data on a learning outcome that students were expected to be proficient in (Chart 3). Thus the aggregate data on programs meeting or missing the benchmarks of their learning outcomes include metrics when students were beginning to learn and comprehend the learning outcomes as well as when students were expected to be proficient in the outcomes.

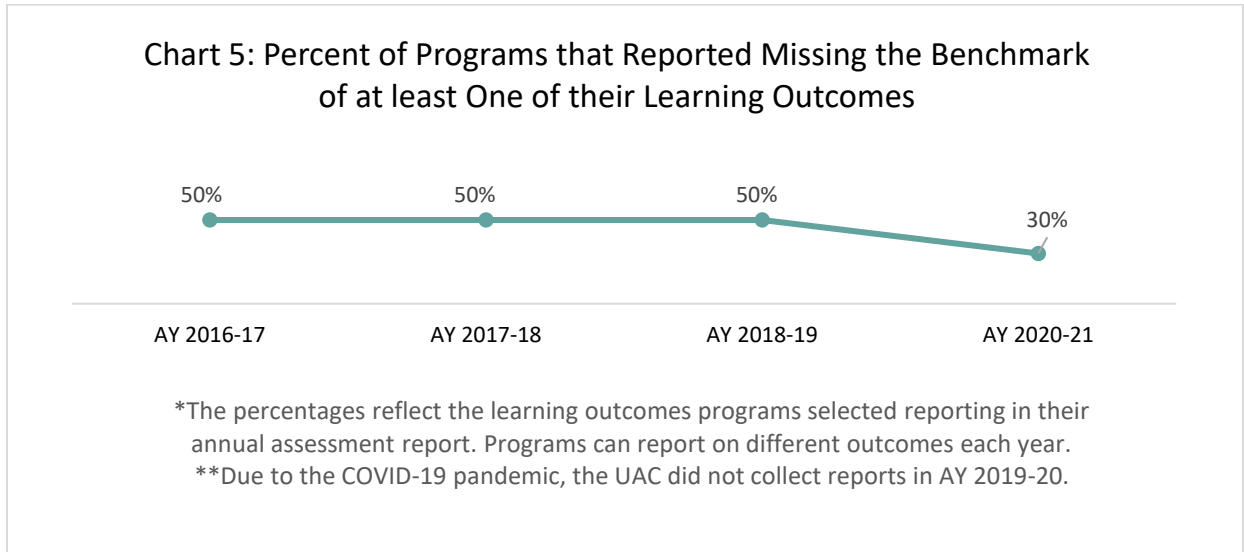


Considering the nuances of the data, the recommendations the UAC made in its report on AY 2018-19, and the ensuing discussions that took place across the University, the UAC can, in part, infer that aggregate data show programs' AY 2020-21 reported learning outcomes data returning to AY 2016-2017 and 2017-18 levels (Chart 4).





Conversely, aggregate data on programs missing the benchmark of at least one of their learning outcomes markedly decreased in AY 2020-21 (Chart 5). Again, because some programs reported meeting or exceeding the benchmark of at least one learning outcome, and missing the benchmark of at least one other learning outcome, the combined data in each academic year for Charts 4 and 5 do not equal 100%.



Colleges in AY 2020-21 agreed that, by and large, students continued to succeed in their programs. According to CDM’s college report, “Despite the challenges faced by the impacts of COVID-19 on our program, the data...[show] that our students are doing well, overall, in meeting the learning outcomes.” CAS’s college report highlighted its programs’ “strong evidence of students achieving learning outcomes in communication,...critical thinking and analysis,...and skills related to the discipline or professionalism in the discipline.” In the face of its challenges, COM also celebrated student achievements. One of its licensure exams, COMLEX-USA Level 2PE, has been suspended as of mid-2020, and thus, COM explained, it has experienced “more pressure...to create standardized clinical skills assessment for licensing.” But COM saw “continued success on COMLEX-USA Levels 1, 2CE, 2PE, and 3.” Moreover, its residency match rate remained strong. COM explained, “Our students are continuing to perform well and meet expectations in spite of challenges created by COVID.” (For more on COM’s work, see Appendix A, COM.)

## **b. Challenges**

Surprisingly only 43% of program-level reports explicitly mentioned the pandemic in their reports. The report forms did not include any questions on teaching, learning, and assessing specifically in the pandemic, yet the aggregate data show that the pandemic certainly affected their daily actions. In contrast, all five college-level assessment reports (100%) referenced the pandemic and the ways in which it challenged and changed teaching, learning, and assessment.

Program reports explained that the pandemic took time away from their assessment activities. Some programs had less time and/or faculty expertise to collect and analyze data. The top three responses to the question on the challenges programs faced when carrying out their assessment process were the pandemic (25% of respondents), collecting and analyzing data (25% of respondents), and needing to include more faculty into the discussion (23% of respondents).

College reports further explained the reasons programs faced difficulty in carrying out their assessment processes. Competing priorities and interests, leadership transitions, program or organizational restructuring, and staffing shortages resulted in less time spent on program-wide assessment and more need for faculty development in the area.

For instance, in its college report, WCHP explained, “Data collection was reported to be challenging.” The pandemic and faculty contract lengths led to “a decrease in faculty knowledge related to assessment,” and thus limited data collection. The College of Dental Medicine (CDM), in its college report, wrote that the pandemic’s impact and the college’s organizational restructuring that replaced faculty leaders with department chairs “posed some challenges this year. Our data collection and monitoring were way behind schedule.” Going forward, CDM will revise its assessment process to include the chairs. Both CDM and WCHP also put forth the goal of providing faculty with further development and guidance on assessment.

For CAS, according to its college report, “most programs reported [student learning outcome] assessment process successes, [but a] few reported challenges.” Of those challenges, some “had to do with coordination efforts within units” mostly as a result of the college’s reorganization. For the College of Graduate and Professional Studies (CGPS), its “largest challenge” to student learning assessment stemmed from the vacant college-level position of Director of Accreditation, Academic Policy, and Assessment. Due to the vacancy, other CGPS administrators and professional staff have taken on additional responsibilities that entail “gathering and analyzing data and preparing the required [annual assessment] reports.”

### **c. Unexpected Opportunities and Outcomes**

Programs and colleges welcomed opportunities and incorporated unique and creative methods into their work to support and advance student learning that resulted in unexpected outcomes. Some college reports expressed a common theme of their faculty’s and professional staff’s agility to alter or change direction to adjust to the variable and fluctuating conditions. CGPS, in its college report, applauded its programs’ “ability to be both agile and responsive to the changing landscape.” CDM underscored, “Our faculty were extremely agile and modified their courses” to the remote and cohort models. In [his fall 2021 assembly address](#), UNE President Herbert echoed the sentiment: “We must be agile... [and] to take advantage of opportunities presented by a rapidly changing world, we must be nimble” (p. 5). UNE’s flexibility in challenging conditions advanced the University’s mission.

Aggregate data from the program reports show programs regularly taking actions based on their assessment data. Nearly all programs (95%) reported taking data-informed actions to improve student learning. The top three responses to the question highlight the specific actions many

programs took: 75% reported reviewing, revising, or modifying the curriculum; 55% reported revising courses, labs, or clinicals; and 48% reported revising assessment measures.

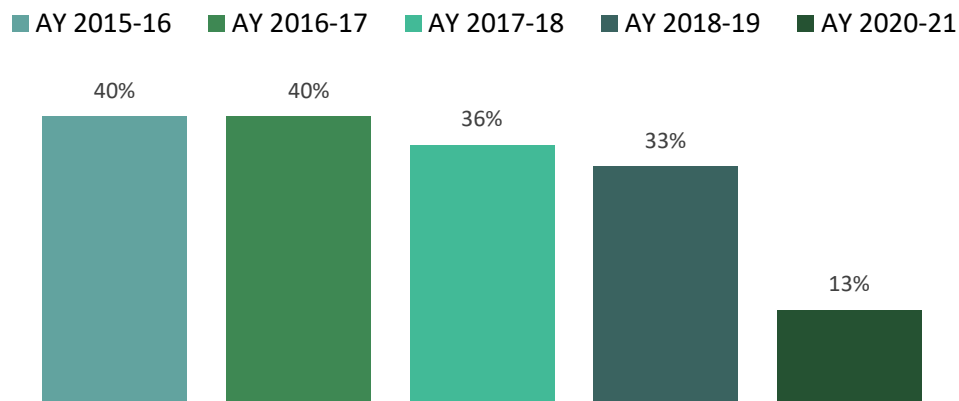
Some college reports highlighted programs replacing traditional teaching practices with, or adding to traditional teaching practices, more experiential methods and/or online tools. “Disruption of traditional education delivery methods and measures was a unifying theme across all [WCHP] programs amidst the COVID-19 pandemic,” the WCHP college report explained. WCHP implemented more simulation, community-based learning, and virtual health care delivery exercises that proved to be successful. Thus the pandemic brought about “an appreciation of new methods that may be more effective inside and outside of the classroom setting.” WCHP plans to further incorporate these methods into future courses. (For more on WCHP’s work, see Appendix A, WCHP.) In its college report, the College of Osteopathic Medicine (COM) also explained that it plans to “continue to utilize and expand the online [discipline-specific] courses to provide consistent interface between [campus-based] clinical discipline faculty and the distributed clinical experiences at the core clinical campuses.”

Some colleges also reported leveraging software tools in the pandemic to support student learning. For CDM, its college report explained that the pandemic “required us to utilize [the cloud storage software] Box as we had not done before.” The college “created multiple virtual patient case activities” in Box, including one that second- and fourth-year students engaged in together. CDM’s use of Box has been such a success that the college plans to explore ways in which it can continue to use the tool in the future. (For more on CDM’s work, see Appendix A, CDM.) COM aims to implement more technology into its curriculum, particularly ExamSoft to administer rubric examinations and “allow for better assessment tracking, analysis, and feedback to students.” In the immediate future, COM also seeks to adopt various digital platforms to assess student learning, store assessment data, and track student enrollment.

Colleges also noted the University’s recent adoption of Brightspace as a growth opportunity. In its college report, CGPS expressed feeling “delighted to have a new and modern” LMS. As UNE’s fully online college, CGPS especially plans to leverage Brightspace’s tools and functionalities to increase assessment data collection, aggregation, extraction, analysis, dashboarding, and benchmarking at the granular course level to “improve student learning outcomes and increase retention and student success.” As CGPS further embeds Brightspace into its regular operations, it will also greatly benefit from the LMS’s course evaluation and ePortfolio platforms.

Aggregate data show programs have been using the UAC’s recommendations from past years to adjust their assessment processes. For instance, for several years the UAC has recommended the University administer fewer surveys as indirect measures to avoid creating survey fatigue and potentially skewed or insufficient assessment data. Data show that, throughout the last several years, markedly fewer programs have reported using surveys (Chart 6).

Chart 6: Percent of Programs Report Using Surveys as Indirect Measures



\*The percentages reflect the measures programs selected reporting in their annual assessment report. Programs can report on different measures each year.

\*\*Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the UAC did not collect reports in AY 2019-20.

The AY 2020-21 aggregate data show a good balance in programs' reported use of direct and indirect measures: 90% reported direct measures, and 50% reported indirect measures (Note: 45% of programs reported both direct and indirect measures). The top three direct measures programs reported in AY 2020-21 highlight some commonalities in the ways programs assess student learning: 38% reported using a written assignment (e.g., essay, literature review, or report), 35% reported using quizzes or exams, and 28% reported using a senior capstone or final project.

The UAC applauds the decreased use of surveys and suggests the University continue to reduce survey usage, further establish OIRDA as a centralized place to administer and monitor survey usage on a university-wide scale, and discuss adopting an institution-wide survey license. The UAC also suggests the University continue to engage in discussions on establishing a standard for a reasonable percentage of survey usage across the institution (Recommendation 4).

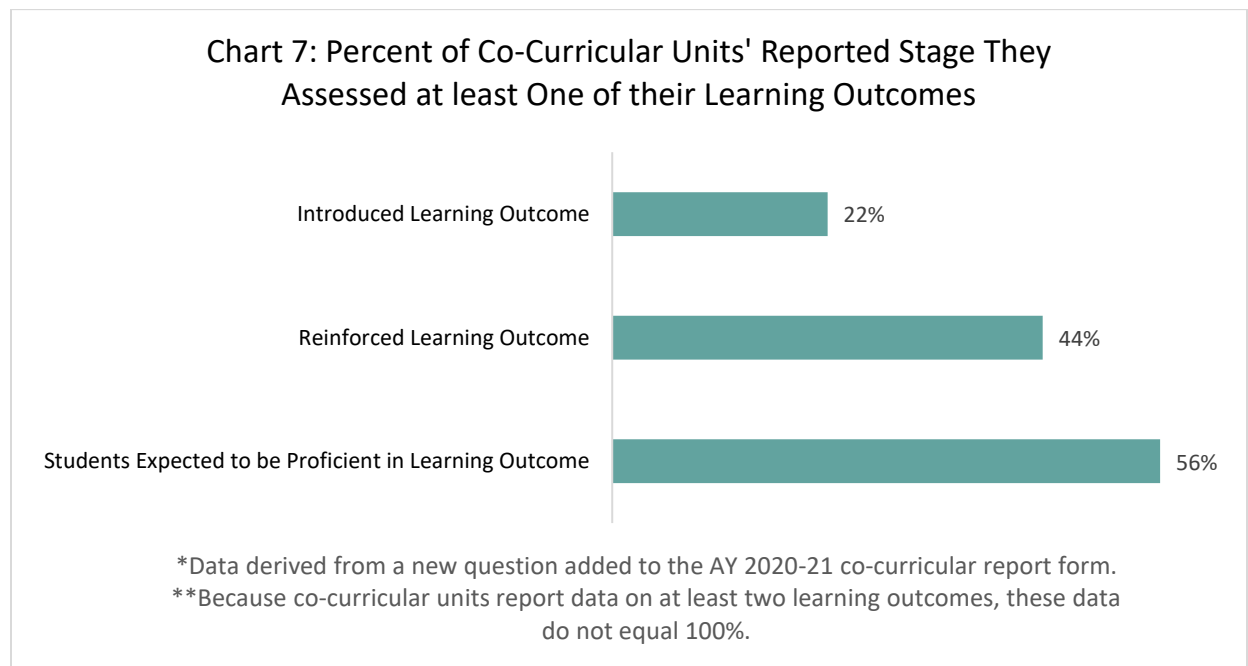
## 2. Co-Curricular Units and Divisions

### a. Student Successes

By and large, co-curricular units also reported strong evidence of student success in AY 2020-21. More specifically, 78% of co-curricular units reported meeting or exceeding the benchmark of at least one of their student learning outcomes in AY 2020-21, and 22% reported missing the benchmark of at least one of their student learning outcomes the same year. The UAC has also been collecting these data on co-curricular units for several years, and while it cannot make apples-to-apples comparisons with the longitudinal data, it has made some inferences.

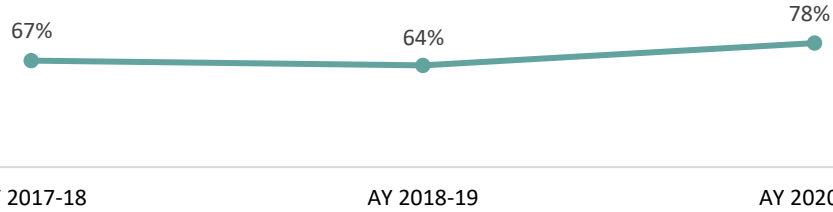
As in the program report forms, the UAC asks co-curricular units to report on at least two learning outcomes every year, but units can choose to report on different ones each year. Moreover, some units (e.g., 22% in AY 2020-21) reported meeting or exceeding the benchmark of at least one learning outcome, and missing the benchmark of at least one other learning outcome. Thus the combined data for each academic year do not equal 100%. However, these data provide the UAC and the University at large a way in which to monitor and assess university-wide assessment as a whole, and provide co-curricular units with feedback to advance their assessment process.

As noted earlier in the academic program and college section of this report, to better understand these data, the UAC added a question on the AY 2020-21 report form asking co-curricular units the stage in which they assessed student learning on each of their reported learning outcomes (i.e. introduced the learning outcome, reinforced the learning outcome, or students were expected to be proficient in the learning outcome). Of the co-curricular unit reports, 22% reported data on a learning outcome they introduced, 44% reported data on a learning outcome they reinforced, and 56% reported data on a learning outcome that students were expected to be proficient in (Chart 7). Thus the aggregate data on units meeting or missing the benchmarks of their learning outcomes include metrics when students were beginning to learn and comprehend the learning outcomes as well as when they were expected to be proficient in the outcomes.



Considering the nuances of the data, the recommendations the UAC made in its report on AY 2018-19, and the ensuing discussions that took place across the University, the UAC can, in part, infer that aggregate data show co-curricular units' AY 2020-21 reported learning outcomes data increased (Chart 8).

Chart 8: Percent of Co-Curricular Units that Reported Meeting or Exceeding the Benchmark of at least One of their Learning Outcomes

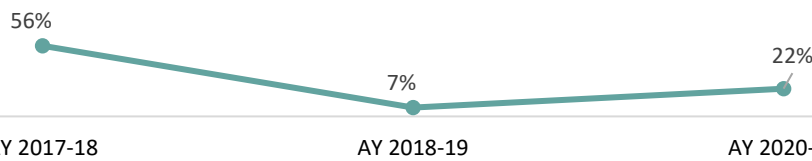


\*The percentages reflect the learning outcomes units selected reporting in their annual assessment report. Units can report on different outcomes each year.

\*\*Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the UAC did not collect reports in AY 2019-20.

Conversely, aggregate data on co-curricular units missing the benchmark of at least one of their learning outcomes decreased in AY 2018-19 and remained low in AY 2020-21 (Chart 9).

Chart 9: Percent of Co-Curricular Units that Reported Missing the Benchmark of at least One of their Learning Outcomes



\*The percentages reflect the learning outcomes unit selected reporting in their annual assessment report. Units can report on different outcomes each year.

\*\*Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the UAC did not collect reports in AY 2019-20.

The UAC aims to continue to collaborate with co-curricular units to further develop their assessment process and build a larger collection of longitudinal data (Recommendation 1).

## b. Challenges

Compared to the academic program-level reports, a higher percentage of co-curricular unit-level reports (56% or five of the nine reporting units) referenced the pandemic. Like the college leaders in their college-level assessment reports, both co-curricular division-level reports (100%)

mentioned the pandemic and the ways in which it challenged and changed teaching, learning, student support, and assessment.

Co-curricular units had to either temporarily suspend or deliberately adjust their programs and activities in AY 2020-21 to ensure the safety of the University community. For example, 33% reported pandemic-related challenges in their responses to the question on the data-informed actions they took to improve student learning, and 33% of them recognized its impact in their responses to the question on their assessment process. Essentially, the pandemic detracted from their usual assessment data collection and analysis efforts.

Due to restrictions on international travel, for instance, Global Education had to briefly pause its short-term travel courses and semester-long study abroad programs. The unit used the time to reflect on and further develop its study abroad student learning outcomes, revise its assessment measures, and build a strong basis to further its student learning outcomes. Fortunately, in AY 2021-22, Global Education has resumed its courses and programs and students are traveling abroad.

For other co-curricular units, altering programs and activities to meet the safety protocols of the pandemic adversely impacted student learning in some areas. For instance, Student Affairs noted in its division report, “Some programs that required hands-on or skills-based learning observed deficiencies in learning and the performance of skills when compared to previous years.” When it’s safe again to get together in person, those programs plan to offer more student trainings. While Library Services made Zoom “the primary method by which user instruction was delivered” to maintain safe conditions in the pandemic, it pointed out in its division report that “engagement on Zoom was lower than during in-person sessions.” Thus the Library reported that it needs to consider additional tools to engage with students.

For Student Affairs, the pandemic also “brought significant challenges to the assessment process including staffing furloughs, the resignation of an Associate Dean who led our assessment process, additional staffing [vacancies] for the majority of the AY, parental leaves, and division restructuring.” The report reiterated, “These challenges directly impacted the quality and effectiveness of this year’s assessment process.” Student Affairs’ restructuring in AY 2021-22 and hiring of an Assistant Dean of Students will help remedy these challenges. (For more on Student Affairs’ work, see Appendix A, Student Affairs.)

Amid the challenging conditions, co-curricular units also faced difficulty in collecting student learning data. Because some Student Affairs units collect more data than others, the division as a whole has struggled to understand its division-wide student learning successes and areas for improvement. That said, more student learning takes place than the units account for. According to the Student Affairs division report, “The learning outcomes being reported may not be representative of the broad scope of learning that occurs within our division.” Library Services also faced difficulty, particularly in assessing student learning in the online environment. Because students were less engaged when online, the Library found it challenging to assess students based on their discussions and activities. Moreover, “It felt difficult to ask anything more of students or

faculty during the hybrid teaching model implementation. Everyone was stretched beyond their capacity.”

### **c. Unexpected Opportunities and Outcomes**

Like the academic programs, in the face of these challenges, co-curricular units and divisions welcomed opportunities and incorporated unique and creative methods into their work to support and advance student learning that resulted in unexpected outcomes.

Student Affairs, in its division report, explained, “This year’s findings highlight our division’s capabilities and success in developing creative strategies and adapting to alternative learning platforms to both continue and enhance student learning.” Student Affairs’ adaptations to the conditions indeed “enhanced” students’ co-curricular experiences. In compliance with pandemic-related safety measures, Student Affairs ran virtual programs, small group sessions, and one-on-one trainings, among many other offerings.

To accommodate the hybrid, cohort, and online class formats in AY 2020-21, Library Services also used a hybrid model and implemented new practices and technologies. Library faculty and professional staff made themselves available both in person on the Biddeford and Portland campus libraries as well as online. Special Collections put in place a new practice of allowing students to “focus on one item in a collection instead of multiple items...[that] produced higher student engagement and deeper analysis than in years past.” It also adopted a document camera, which allowed students to examine objects without visiting the archive in person. The archive has since made these changes part of its operations. Library Services also adjusted its virtual reality project to the pandemic by creating a fully online lab to accompany its in-person experience. Evidence shows that both formats effectively advance student learning. In response to student demand, Library Services also continues to increase its offerings in digital learning tools, including audio books, podcasts, and multimedia. (For more on the Library’s initiatives, see Appendix A, Library Services.)

Student Affairs’ unique and creative co-curricular offerings, its division report explained, “diversified and increased participation.” Residential and commuter undergraduate and graduate and professional students who, for instance, did not have the time, transportation, or funds before the pandemic to participate in the co-curricular activities, meetings, and leadership opportunities could now join in. While some Students Affairs programs saw a decrease in student attendance, others experienced a significant increase. The remote environment made these offerings more accessible to a broader range of the UNE student body. Student Affairs’ modifications to its events, activities, and programs led to “an increase in participation, including an increase in the diversity of participants.” Thus the division plans to continue using the online platforms in the future to make its programs more accessible and increase student engagement.

## **B. Initiatives to further Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and a Sense of Belonging**

Of the unexpected opportunities that arose from the pandemic and the #MeToo and Black Lives Matter movements, the University, by and large, has increased discussions and efforts toward



improving diversity, equity, inclusion, and a sense of belonging. In his [fall 2021 assembly address](#), President Herbert encouraged these efforts. “We must embed and embrace diversity and inclusion, in all their forms, in everything we do,” he asserted. “Although I am very proud of the progress we have made, we are imperfect. We have more to learn about our history and its ongoing legacies, and we have much work to do to create a society free of bigotry and discrimination of all kinds” (p. 7). Many AY 2020-21 assessment reports highlighted these goals and initiatives.

## 1. Academic Programs and Colleges

Of the 40 program-level reports, 18% mentioned implementing or planning to implement initiatives to further diversity, equity, inclusion, and a sense of belonging. Three of the five (60%) college-level reports also explicitly mentioned these initiatives.

Many programs have engaged in discussions, made plans, and taken noteworthy steps to increase and support diversity, equity, inclusion, and a sense of belonging. In its college report, CAS explained that “several programs are concerned about equitable access” and plan on “incorporating” justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion pedagogical tools and instructional materials into the curriculum. The college thus asked for “resources for developing and incorporating Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in programs and curricula.” WCHP likewise explained in its college report that some programs have “created additional opportunities for students to share concerns regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion,” and plan to continue incorporating initiatives into the curriculum.

CGPS spent a significant portion of time in AY 2020-21 reviewing its courses to ensure they include diversity, equity, and inclusion teachings, concepts, and resources. In its college report, CGPS explained “that a focus on [diversity, equity, and inclusion] and an investigation into where and how [they are] presented in our programs is central to the CGPS mission and several of UNE’s strategic priorities.” CGPS’s review has led its programs to add or alter course materials, assignments, and assessments. (For more on CGPS’s work, see Appendix A, CGPS.)

In addition to the many efforts discussed in the annual assessment reports, faculty, professional staff, and administrators continued throughout AY 2020-21 to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion. From the College Assemblies to the University Faculty Assembly, each academic area of the University has a committee in place and goals in process to forward this work. CETL also organized numerous speakers, events, and workshops around supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion in the classroom. The UAC has likewise made it a goal and started by engaging in conversations in its monthly meetings and, in collaboration with CETL, organizing a workshop on equity-based assessment at the fall faculty forum in December 2021.

## 2. Co-Curricular Units and Divisions

Of the 9 co-curricular unit-level reports, 22% mentioned implementing or planning to implement initiatives to further diversity, equity, inclusion, and a sense of belonging. The two reporting divisions in the AY 2020-21 assessment cycle, Student Affairs and Library Services, as well as other co-curricular divisions, have engaged in and have taken further steps to advance this work.

In its division report, Student Affairs highlighted the significant increase in student interest in programs that focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion topics. As noted above, when Student Affairs modified the format of its programs and activities to the online environment, the division saw a significant increase in student representation and participation. Its hybrid and online programs and activities drew in a broader range of the UNE student body from the undergraduate and graduate/professional levels, to residential and commuter statuses, to the college represented. Likewise, UNE's Office of Intercultural Student Engagement saw a remarkable "400% increase in registration with increased participation diversity in education level, age, gender, professional range, and location" in its Diversity Leadership Certificate program, according to the Student Affairs' division report. The substantial increase highlights the impact the 2020 Black Lives Matter demonstrations had on students and their interest in advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Thanks to Library Services, users can now get easy access to diversity, equity, and inclusion resources through its newly built [Community, Equity, and Diversity Library Resource Initiative \(CEDLRI\)](#) web pages. As the Library states on CEDLRI's home page, "This initiative aims to provide the UNE community with resources that inform and inspire action to support inclusive campuses and extended learning sites." Through CEDLRI, users can find resources related to race and ethnicity, LGBTQIA+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, plus), disability and inclusion, gender, socioeconomic status, religion and spirituality, national origin, viewpoint diversity, and self-care.

Throughout AY 2020-21, more University offices, divisions, and centers undertook diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. Under the Division of Athletics, the football team kicked off the academic year with an organized march for Black Lives Matter. By then, Athletics had established a community, equity, and diversity committee (ACED) made up of professional staff who soon thereafter partnered with the student-athlete advisory committee on community, equity, and diversity (SAAC-CED). ACED and SAAC-CED went on to organize several talks and workshops. Among its many projects, UNE's Office of Community, Equity, and Diversity also organized numerous Forums on Fridays that brought the University community together to discuss a variety of topics. In addition, the office hosted speakers throughout the week of January 18, 2021, to commemorate Martin Luther King, Jr. Among its many projects, the Office of Intercultural Student Engagement organized a keynote speaker, Eddie Glaude, Jr., for Black History Month in February.

### **C. Key Actions Programs and Units Plan to Take**

In past years, on the program and co-curricular unit assessment report form, the UAC has included two questions that ask programs and units to report the actions they plan to take to further their assessment process and advance student learning. At the end of the AY 2020-21 report form, the UAC added a third place to specifically list those action items for the coming year. Data from that question, which asks about the key actions programs and units plan to take in the next academic year to advance student learning, provides insight into their future directions.

Programs' top five responses reveal many of their plans to catch up on assessment-related work that may have slowed during the pandemic: 48% of programs plan to revise assessment measures,

38% plan to meet with a working group, 35% plan to collect and analyze assessment data, and 30% plan to review their student learning outcomes or align them with the curriculum.

The top three co-curricular responses also reflect this effort to catch up on assessment-related work: 56% of co-curricular units plan to revise assessment measures, 44% plan to review their curriculum, and 44% plan to review their programs and activities.

Programs and co-curricular units also reported plans to review their rubrics, create benchmarks for their student learning outcomes, map student learning outcomes to their curriculum, implement technologies, offer faculty development opportunities on assessment, and further diversity, equity, and inclusion. As of this writing, the pandemic continues to impact teaching, learning, and assessment. Yet the University has used these conditions as growth opportunities and continues to make students its priority.

## **IV. Key Findings and Recommendations**

### **A. Key Findings**

The UAC has now written and distributed its annual report for seven years, and presented its report to the University community for six years. Thus the UAC believes it's a good time to reflect on the process.

Assessment of student learning as an iterative process provides inherently valuable tools to understand, support, and advance student learning at the University. The UAC aims to continually review and improve the University's assessment process to acquire sound, longitudinal data that truly gets at the extent to which all students internalize, demonstrate, and apply the learning outcomes. By doing so, the University can make data-informed decisions to further support and advance its curricular, co-curricular, and extracurricular offerings, and ultimately enhance student learning. The UAC aggregates, analyzes, and reports assessment data at the university level to assess the University's assessment process, alleviate apprehension about assessment, and provide assessment support to the University community in areas of assessment that need further development.

The key findings of this year's report follow:

- The COVID-19 pandemic challenged and changed teaching, learning, and assessment.
- Many units reported that competing priorities, leadership transitions, program and organizational restructuring, and staffing shortages diverted attention away from assessment data collection and analysis.
- The UAC saw a slight decrease in program and co-curricular reports in AY 2020-21.
- By and large, programs and co-curricular units reported strong evidence of students meeting or exceeding the learning outcomes in AY 2020-21.
- The vast majority of programs (95%) reported taking data-informed actions to improve student learning.

- Programs, co-curricular units, colleges, and divisions welcomed opportunities and incorporated unique and creative methods into their work to support and advance student learning that resulted in unexpected outcomes.
- Many programs and co-curricular units replaced traditional teaching practices with, or adding to traditional teaching practices, more experiential methods and/or online tools.
- Markedly fewer programs reported using surveys as indirect measures.
- For some co-curricular units, altering programs and activities to meet the safety protocols of the pandemic adversely impacted student learning in some areas.
- Unique and creative co-curricular remote, hybrid, and small group formats diversified student representation and increased student participation in the co-curricular activities.
- Of the unexpected opportunities that arose from the pandemic and the #MeToo and Black Lives Matter movements, the University has increased discussions and taken noteworthy steps toward improving diversity, equity, inclusion, and a sense of belonging.
- Programs and co-curricular units continue to make plans and take data-informed actions to further assessment and student learning.

## **B. UAC's Recommendations to Itself**

The UAC aims to return to the recommendations it made for itself in last year's report:

1. Support more university-wide, student-facing, and supporting units to define co-curricular learning outcomes and assess student learning and programmatic effectiveness. In its previous reports, the UAC aimed to bring more co-curricular units, including Athletics, WCHP Service Learning, and the Centers and Institutes, into assessment. The UAC continues to make this a long-term goal.
2. Add more resources to the "Assessment Resources" web page in AY 2021-22 for academic programs and colleges, and co-curricular units and divisions to assist with enhancing data collection and analysis approaches.
3. Update the UAC's handbook, underlining its charge as a resource for assessment support, by fall 2022.
4. Continue working toward reducing survey usage, further establishing OIRDA as a centralized place to administer and monitor survey usage on a university-wide scale, adopting an institution-wide survey license, and establishing a standard for a reasonable percentage of survey usage across the institution.

## References

Herbert, J. (2021, August). [Fall assembly, President's remarks](#). Biddeford, ME: University of New England.

Jankowski, N. A. (2020, August). [Assessment during a crisis: Responding to a global pandemic](#). Urbana, IL: University of Illinois and Indiana University, National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment.

## **Appendix A:**

### **Colleges' and Divisions' Assessment Activities, AY 2020-21**

#### **❖ College of Arts and Sciences (CAS)**

The process of assessing academic programs in CAS was significantly disrupted in AY 2019-20 due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. This year's work represents a significant return to the prior years' practice of a robust pattern of annual academic program assessment and reporting. The work in AY 2020-21 was carried out across the college in the context of the re-organization of CAS from 13 departments to 6 schools.

Under the leadership of Associate Professor Linda Morrison and Associate Dean Stine Brown, CAS has taken AY 2020-21 to reimagine and revise the assessment process for the core curriculum. They worked in consultation with the CAS Dean, CETL leadership, CAS school leadership, and CAS Faculty Assembly's Academic Curriculum Committee (ACC) and Core Curriculum Committee (CCC) to develop and vet the pilot assessment project being implemented in fall of 2021.

Our prior method of direct assessment in core courses has been time-intensive and fragmented, and it left out a significant number of faculty who don't teach core courses. The core curriculum belongs to all faculty regardless of the courses they teach and it clearly could be argued that the four learning outcomes of the core are embedded in most of the courses we teach, even those outside of the core. Additionally, the volume of assessment data collected in our previous model created assessment fatigue as many courses are assessed at both program and core levels. Students and faculty alike were taxed to participate in these assessment efforts in addition to the regular assessment already done as a part of course requirements. For example, many of the core areas collected pre- and post-measures of learning outcomes, in addition to course assignment rubrics. Each core area also generally surveyed students to ascertain if they perceived the course had met the learning outcomes as specified on the syllabus as an indirect assessment method. These approaches combined led to a decrease in participation in the last few years across many core areas.

One clear intention of the revision to the core curriculum assessment process is to make it less onerous in its implementation and more unified in terms of the data gathered. To address the shortcomings of our previous model of core assessment, a new model is proposed that will be piloted fall of 2021. Rather than a top-down model of using the overarching learning objectives to direct core course requirements and build individual assessment methods in each of the required core areas (what we have been doing), it is proposed that CAS focus our collective efforts on assessing one of the four core learning objectives as a whole faculty. Further, it is proposed that assessment methodology be built from the course level up such that we have faculty articulate how current course-level learning outcomes could map onto core learning objectives and utilize existing assignments within each course for the collection of assessment data. It is proposed that we collect core assessment data on one of the four learning outcomes for three years, and then switch to a different core learning objective on a three-year rotational schedule.

## ❖ College of Dental Medicine (CDM)

Assessment of student learning is a priority in CDM as we continue to refine and improve our assessment process. The following are some of the implementations during AY 2019-20 and AY 2020-21:

- Revised Clinical Skills Assessment (CSA) rubrics and evaluation forms were implemented in summer 2019. A new rubric for the criteria found in all CSAs was created and implemented. Pre-clinic course directors were provided with the new and revised rubrics and asked to align their Simulation Skills Assessment rubrics and evaluation forms when applicable.
- We recommended changes to the membership of our CDM Assessment and Outcomes Committee (AOC) to include our Faculty Leaders and the Chair of our Continuous Quality Improvement Subcommittee. This was done to improve communication with course directors and help to better “close the loop” on our assessment process.
- A Biomedical Sciences Integration Taskforce continually worked to review and revise the biomedical sciences curriculum to condense and re-sequence content in preparation for the new Integrated National Board Dental Examination (INBDE) that our Class of 2022 challenges in their fourth year. Modifications continue to be made to assessments to better prepare students for the question style of the INBDE. We created and incorporated Dentally Relevant Integrated Learning Series (DRILS) activities into the biomedical science courses to help students see the dental relevance of biomedical science topics early in their learning. A simulated mock INBDE was administered in spring 2021.
- A Clinical Progression Examination was implemented in spring 2020 to assess readiness of second-year students for the third-year clinic curriculum. The assessment was further revised in spring 2021 to involve specialist faculty in the development of questions.

The CDM continues to make a concerted effort to improve assessment of student learning, communication of assessment results, and mechanisms for “closing the loop” on assessment through data-driven plans of action. We anticipate continued focus on the following areas over the next few years:

- Better tracking and monitoring of patient care experiences for each student;
- Establishment of benchmarks for pass rates (for both first attempts and repeat attempts) for Simulation Skills Assessments (SSAs) and Clinical Skills Assessments (CSAs);
- More involvement of the CDM Assessment and Outcomes Committee (AOC) in communicating internally to promote continuous curricular evaluation and improvement;
- Development of progression assessments for dental students at the end of the first and third academic year;
- Implementation of comprehensive case documentations to improve student reflection and self-assessment in the third and fourth year; and
- Development of Department Chairs to be involved in meaningful program assessment.

## ❖ College of Graduate and Professional Studies (CGPS)

The CGPS Assessment Working Group, in its fifth year now, brings together faculty from each academic program to collaborate on the development of systematic assessment plans, collection and analysis of assessment data, and the identification and implementation of action items that surface from our analyses. The Working Group continues to commence each year in January, meeting monthly through April and then biweekly through June.

When there are director-level employee changes, the Working Group on-boards new members with the aim of updating these members on past findings and to work on current cross-program assessment goals and activities. This year, the group welcomed a new Director from Public Health, Deborah Shields.

This year (AY 2020-21) the Working Group collectively focused its efforts on understanding the degree to which diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) concepts are incorporated into CGPS coursework. Inclusion of DEI concepts in CGPS courses aligns with the UNE strategic priorities of exceptional teaching and learning, increased enrollment, progress to graduation, and lifelong learning, and a welcoming, inclusive, and vibrant community, and is central to the CGPS mission of educating and supporting future leaders. In this spirit, the Working Group mapped the assignments and discussion boards for DEI content in first-year courses across CGPS academic programs. This mapping exercise identified 11 out of 45 first-year graduate courses that would benefit from either the inclusion of or the addition of DEI materials. Moreover, this assessment has set the Working Group on a 3-year exploration centered on DEI in the curriculum.

In AY 2020-21, CGPS continued to expand its reach by enrolling students in several new programs and certificates. In fall 2020 we enrolled our first students in the new Master's in Healthcare Administration, along with four stackable graduate certificates (Emergency Management, Health Data Quality, Healthcare Management, and Health Policy, Law, and Compliance). In spring 2021 the Applied Nutrition program began enrolling students into the ACEND accredited RDN focus, and the Education program launched two new graduate certificates (Teaching Online and Designing Learning Experiences). The Education program also began offering a Master of Science in Education - Inclusion Education in summer 2021.

CGPS remains committed to implementing an ePortfolio to offer students continuity of their online coursework and to utilize ePortfolio and additional Brightspace tools, such as the competencies tool, to offer more methods for systematic assessment of quantitative data (e.g. grades) and qualitative data (e.g. writing samples). This year the Working Group plans to revisit these objectives once the ePortfolio and the competency assessment tools have been made available by information technology services (ITS) for integration with courses.

The Working Group previously identified the need for a specialty tutor in research methods and biostatistics that would be shared between the graduate programs in Public Health and Applied Nutrition. A plan was developed to staff this need for our students using adjunct faculty in our programs and will be presented to the new Dean this fall. Through various avenues we have also



surfaced the need for dedicated graduate-level career service offerings for CGPS students. Recommendations about how to fill this need have been discussed and will be brought to the new Dean this year.

## ❖ **College of Osteopathic Medicine (COM)**

### **Overview of COM Assessment System**

The University of New England, College of Osteopathic Medicine (UNE COM), assesses the progress and performance of its osteopathic medical students in an array of methods.

Student progress in the Preclinical Curriculum (Years 1 and 2) is continuously assessed by periodic high-stakes written exams in the Osteopathic Medical Knowledge (OMK) I & II courses (delivered through ExamSoft), oral exams in the Osteopathic Medical Knowledge II course, and high-stakes written and competency-based practical assessments in the Osteopathic Clinical Skills (OCS) I & II courses. Additionally, formative assessment is ongoing during the Preclinical Years through peer evaluation, reflective essays, and other means. To progress beyond the Preclinical Years, students are required to pass the first in a series of licensing exams from the National Board of Osteopathic Medical Examiners (NBOME) entitled the Comprehensive Osteopathic Medical Licensing Examination of the USA Level 1 (COMLEX-Level 1). Practice exams in the form of Foundational Biomedical Science Comprehensive Osteopathic Medical Achievement Test (COMAT FBS) and Comprehensive Osteopathic Medical Self-Assessment Examination Examinations (COMSAEs) are administered with required benchmarks on the COMSAE to provide students with information regarding their readiness to take the high-stakes COMLEX-USA Level 1 examination successfully.

In the Clinical Curriculum (Years 3 and 4), also known as clerkships, student progress and performance are assessed through a variety of means. In Year 3, osteopathic medical students are assigned to a clinical campus site. Assessments include standard preceptor evaluations, self-evaluations and the NBOME's Comprehensive Osteopathic Medical Achievement Test (COMAT) series that assesses student performance on each of the core rotations, including family medicine, internal medicine, psychiatry, obstetrics and gynecology, pediatrics, and surgery. During this time, students are required to pass the COMLEX-USA Level 2 CE examination (Cognitive Evaluation; a high-stakes written examination), which measures fundamental clinical skills and application of medical knowledge. Of note, the COMLEX-USA Level 2 PE (Physical Examination) has been "suspended indefinitely" as an NBOME product in the wake of COVID-19, leaving individual colleges of osteopathic medicine to certify that students meet the core minimum benchmarks indicated for physical examination skills as a condition of graduation.

### **Trends, Adjustments, and Advancements in COM's Assessment System**

We have noted several strengths in UNE COM student performance. Our students continue to exceed the national mean on both COMLEX Level 1 and Level 2 CE. Students are required to take and score a 500 on a NBOME-approved practice examination called the COMSAE within 1 month of sitting for the COMLEX-USA Levels 1 or 2CE.

Our pass rate on Level 1 was 98.84% (national average: 92.99%) and on Level 2CE was 99.41% (national average: 96.84%). *Note:* COMLEX-USA Level 2PE has been suspended due to COVID-19 as of mid-2020. Our residency match rate this year was 98.0% (via the National Residency Program, NRMP); 78.5% of all applicants Matched in 2021, Match mean for DO schools was 89.1% and for MD schools 92.8%.

Student outcomes are very good, and we continue to anticipate and respond to the changes in preclinical and clinical education. Student satisfaction has continued to improve in regard to academic advising in Years 3 and 4 per yearly and exit surveys.

Questions mimicking Boards possess higher discrimination and allow faculty to write exams, which prepare students for success on Boards and on Wards.

By linking learning outcomes with EPAs, we have been able to document that we are addressing these EPAs longitudinally and preparing students to succeed both in clinical education as well as Graduate Medical Education. When comparing data from last year to this year, our students are continuing to perform well and meet expectations in spite of challenges created by COVID-19.

We have continued to focus and expand our advising program during the clinical portion of the curriculum to ensure student success in the National Residency Match Program. A major component of this is to maintain and improve the pass rate of COMLEX Level 1 & Level 2 CE due to their critical role in residency placement. While having our mean scores exceed national metrics is a major accomplishment, a more critical statistic for residency placement is whether a student passes the examination or not. A further curricular goal is to ensure that graduates are ready for residency; as such, we continue to work towards implementation of, in the near future, a competency-based assessment of the [Association of American Medical Colleges](#) (AAMC) and the [Association of American Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine](#) (AACOM) core entrustable professional activities (EPAs) for entering residency.

The Department of Clinical Education has continued to revise and expand their Medical Student Clinical Advising program, which provides longitudinal academic and career counseling to UNE COM students while completing clinical rotations. This program provides one-on-one advising sessions to all third-year students with two face-to-face, one-hour sessions with students assigned to the core clinical campuses. The initial phase of this program assisted students as they proceeded through the standard core clerkship curriculum. Counseling continued as students navigated the residency application process by providing specialty topic webinars, additional one-on-one coaching, and general coaching for key residency application processes. Advising strategies are modified based on guidance from residency specialty societies and consensus feedback from residency programs.

We continue to utilize and expand the online discipline specific courses to provide a consistent interface between campus-based clinical-discipline faculty and the distributed clinical experiences at the core clinical campuses. We also continue to explore other options for the curriculum to

accommodate board-taking and score release dates such that passing grades for year 2 students are received prior to July 1 when the clerkship years begin.

We continue to revise examination tagging, naming, and organization to allow for improved item assessment tracking, analysis, and exam blueprinting. Question improvement has been an area of focus with multiple faculty development, review, and exam analysis reviews to ensure all assessments are preparing students not only for the Boards, but also for the clinical environments in which they will be working.

We implemented ExamSoft as a tool for rubric examinations in clinical skills to allow for better assessment tracking, analysis, and feedback to students.

We adopted the use of the NBOME's COMAT Foundational Biomedical Sciences Exam in 2020 as a way to ensure that basic science is being taught and properly evaluated; results of this exam both in 2020 and 2021 were competitive and showed a strong foundation in the biomedical sciences for our Year 2 students.

### **Future Plans for COM Assessment System**

We have a number of initiatives for the future of assessment at UNE COM:

1. The Department of Clinical Education operates a Medical Student Clinical Advising Program, which provides longitudinal academic and career counseling to UNE COM students while completing clinical rotations. This program provides one-on-one advising sessions to all third-year students with 2 face-to-face, one-hour sessions while students are embedded in a core clinical campus. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the individual meetings are now conducted via individual video conference meetings with each student. The initial phase of this program assists students as they proceed through the standard core clerkship curriculum. Counseling continues as students navigate the residency application process by providing specialty topic webinars, additional one-on-one coaching, and general coaching for key residency application processes. Further refinements have been implemented this year, including more frequent contact with individual students. In addition, the Office of Clinical Education hosts scheduled whole class video conference meetings with the third- and fourth-year classes. During the height of the pandemic, these meetings were held frequently, at times weekly. The current plan is to host monthly meetings with each class. In addition, vital information is transmitted weekly via an email newsletter.
2. We continue to explore other options for the curriculum to accommodate board taking and score release dates such that passing grades for year 2 students are received prior to July 1 when the clerkship years begin.
3. The Curriculum Advisory Committee is continuing to work towards incorporating the Core Entrustable Professional Activities for Entering Residency (CEPAER) as a competency framework for assessment and curricular revisions.

- a. The Department of Clinical Education hosts two Caucus events each year with invited representative clinical faculty and student coordinators from core clinical campuses. The principal meetings also provide a network mechanism to ensure standardization of learning activities across the geographically diverse clinical campus system. These fall and spring Caucus events provided faculty development topics, such as developing utilization recommendations for the assessment of Entrustable Professional Activities (EPA) in medical students. The fall 2021 Caucus was held in October 2021 and had a robust attendance and program.
- b. We continue to work towards developing an assessment at the end of the third year, guided by the Curriculum Advisory Committee (CAC) Subcommittee on Assessment. Input from clerkship sites would be submitted to this assessment subcommittee. The nature of the data collected would be determined by the particular EPA.
- c. Ongoing work continues for the purpose of evaluating rubrics, policies, and digital support systems to track student data for longitudinal and summary competency assessments.

4. The CAC Subcommittee on Student Evaluation and Assessment is working aggressively on a program to improve quality, organization, and standardization of the ExamSoft test bank items across all courses. Focused goals include:

- a. Improving tagging of categories for organization of test questions as well as improved strength and opportunities reports for students.
- b. Faculty development on test question writing.
- c. Pre-/post-examination review and statistical analysis after every ExamSoft examination.
- d. Improved examination blueprinting.

### **Summary on COM Assessment System**

UNE COM leadership, faculty and professional staff are aggressively proactive regarding assessment and student success. Therefore, we feel that our assessment process is robust. We have multiple groups acting both independently and in concert to further student success through proper assessment. These include the CAC, the Student Assessment and Evaluation Subcommittee of the CAC, the Dean's Leadership Team, and the faculty and professional staff associated with the Departments of Academic Affairs and Clinical Affairs. In addition, we have a Task Force on Assessment Modeled around EPAs for Core Clerkships, with representation from Northern Light Hospitals, Maine General Hospital, and Southern New Hampshire Health System as well as some members of the Subcommittee on Assessment and Evaluation and the Clinical Education Department. This committee strives to represent faculty input from regional clinical campuses focused on assessment in the clerkships modeled around the EPAs.

We have identified one of our major challenges: UNE's digital platform does not support the multiple assessments we currently use, nor does it easily interface with external systems. This problem is going to become more prominent as we try to stay current with our peers and move

forward with the national developments in EPA assessment. We will need a digital platform that can acquire multiple assessments, and can interface with external systems with regards to output and input. Half of the college curriculum occurs at our clinical campuses and this amount of time will increase in the next few years as we strive to meet the changes occurring nationally in medical education. To maintain standardization of training and education across all clinical campuses, UNE COM needs to invest in systems that can interface with hospital systems.

### ❖ **Westbrook College of Health Professions (WCHP)**

AY 2020-21 was a very challenging year due to the global pandemic that began to impact UNE on March 13, 2020. The primary work of the college was to radically adjust and shift teaching/learning models to ensure the curriculum was delivered to students in a way that upheld the academic rigor required, and, when applicable, complied with accreditation standards. This shift occurred in each semester of AY 2020-21. Compliance with accreditation standards required many programs to complete documentation and supply reports to their accreditation bodies in order to report changes in how the curriculum was delivered (i.e. hybrid teaching, classes being moved to online format, clinical placements being shortened in length, changes to clinical placement types, substituting simulation learning for clinical placement). All programs received accreditation approval and were successful in delivering their curriculum without delaying students' graduation.

During the spring semester 2020, some Program Directors elected to transition some of their classes to Brightspace. For a successful launch in the summer 2021 semester, they had to engage themselves and their faculty in Brightspace training during the spring semester. This training provided foundational information regarding the use of this new LMS. However it also provide programs with the opportunity to explore if their current assessment methods within courses, like ExamSoft®, was still the desired format. Some programs also worked with ITS to enhance the services they currently use through ExamSoft® to expand their assessment to allow for curricular mapping.

WCHP continues to actively participate in the work of the UAC. Dr. Sally McCormack Tutt, Interim Dean, and Dr. Wallace Marsh, Associate Clinical Professor, School of Pharmacy, provide representation for the college. Typically the WCHP Program Directors have a winter retreat that has dedicated time to examining practices surrounding assessment and educational effectiveness. However, the winter retreat was not held this year to comply with limiting large gatherings for UNE activities and to also allow Program Directors to spend their time supporting their students and employees while making many adjustments in the curriculum as the pandemic evolved.

WCHP participated in numerous accreditation activities during AY 2020-21. The Master's in Nurse Anesthesia (MSNA) program, under the leadership of Dr. Cheryl Nimmo, submitted their self-study report to the Council on Accreditation of Nurse Anesthesia Educational Programs (COA) and completed a virtual accreditation visit on March 23-24, 2021. The results are still pending and expected to be returned in the fall of 2021. The Master's in Athletic Training program, Bachelor in Nutrition, and Bachelor in Social Work program successfully went through a three-year review with the UAC. The Applied Exercise Science program successfully went through a program review (for those with specialized accreditation) with the UAC. The School of Pharmacy

submitted an interim accreditation report to ACPE in April as a follow-up to the areas of their accreditation standards that were compliant with monitoring.

### ✧ **Division of Student Affairs**

During AY 2020-21, the Division of Student Affairs (DSA) was selective in its assessment efforts as significant professional staff time had to be devoted to challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, the Division assessment plan and work of the DSA Assessment Committee were largely tabled outside of the work of individual units to assess specific programs or offerings.

This year's findings highlight the DSA's capabilities and successes in developing creative strategies and adapting to alternative learning platforms to both continue and enhance student learning. Many units were able to assess student learning in these new modalities but noted the challenges along with the successes. For a Division where learning is often rooted in experiential programs, the units did observe deficiencies in learning and performance of skills compared to previous years when traditional in-person or larger cohort learning activities were possible. However, the increased engagement that virtual programming afforded was not lost on members of the Division and further reinforced the need for multiple delivery options for our future offerings. Developing these programs to meet unit and Divisional learning outcomes more effectively will need to be a focus moving forward.

As we emerge from the COVID 19 pandemic, several efforts in the DSA are underway related to assessment. First, the reorganization of the Division of Student Affairs into three distinct areas or "hubs" of Health and Wellness, Campus Life, and Graduate and Professional Student Affairs will provide a framework to expand the DSA's assessment work. The development of these hubs will allow us to move beyond the granular program or offering level to encompass the broader learning goals within each hub. DSA has also been able to fill the Assistant Dean of Students role, which was vacant since February 2021, and will provide oversight of DSA's assessment efforts and revive the DSA Assessment Committee. Finally, the DSA will reengage work on its assessment plan, calendar, and dashboard to measure divisional successes and student learning, and inform practices through data-driven decision-making.

### ✧ **Library Services**

The COVID-19 pandemic continued to have an impact on in-person services and classes provided by UNE Library Services professional staff. Remote access was still primarily the means by which users had access to Library electronic resources and staff services. A hybrid model allowed a combination of remote and in-person services and teaching.

### **STAFF ORGANIZATION AND COMMUNICATION**

The fourth year of the Library Services Reorganization, the New Models team-based structure of the Library professional staff, is continually undergoing assessment. Each professional staff member was asked to provide written feedback to questions on the team-based structure in their annual performance reviews in spring 2021. The information helps cross-functional team members work together to plan, implement, assess, and continually improve collections and services for the

UNE community. In-person Library professional staff communications are still facilitated by Microsoft Teams and Zoom.

### **COST PER USE STATISTICS FOR COLLECTION MANAGEMENT**

Because of multiple electronic resources, UNE Library Services seamlessly continued to offer remote access to many quality resources: [About UNE Library Services](#). Because of the high number of electronic resources, remote access to them continues to be essential to students, faculty, and professional staff.

Cost-per-use of electronic resources is calculated annually to aid decisions for additions or cancellations to Library collections. Digital Resources professional staff and Research & Teaching Librarians collaborate to evaluate the relevance, availability, and cost of requested electronic resources. The Library budget has allowed the maintenance of existing collections that meet cost-per-use criteria, and the addition of new electronic resources.

Interlibrary loan professional staff continually review journal titles that patrons request to provide statistics for potential purchase of titles. Periodically, journal title subscriptions are canceled if use does not warrant keeping them, and some titles have been added upon request and available budget. This is a particularly strong and effective means of continually assessing the return-on-investment (ROI) of the Library's electronic resources budget. Assessment provides a means by which to keep a dynamic collection of electronic resources that reflect the needs of the UNE community.

### **WEBSITE ANALYTICS ASSESSMENT**

The Web Services and User Experience Librarian regularly tracks the usage of the UNE Library website and makes recommendations for content updates to keep this critical community resource current, relevant, and useful. We look at pageview analytics, outbound-clicks to see which resources are being accessed from which webpages, referral links, and anonymized user demographics such as device, browser, time, and location. We also examine the questions submitted to our Library FAQ database and add new answers as needed, and track use of our live chat service.

### **STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES (SLO)**

Research & Teaching Librarians teach classes, upon request, in conjunction with faculty on specific assignments. Student learning outcomes are assessed to find areas of instruction that need revision and improvement for student success. Below are examples of various Library instruction.

### **USER INSTRUCTION – DOCTOR OF PHYSICAL THERAPY**

PTH 514: Scientific Inquiry I. 64 first-year doctor of physical therapy (DPT) students at 100% participation. Classes were taught with the goal of teaching database searching proficiency and included databases: PubMed, CINAHL, SPORTDiscus, and Cochrane.

Faculty pulled relevant student comments from the course evaluations and reported that there were no negative comments. Some students expressed that this instruction and assignments showed them that it is better than using Google. Comments included:

- We learned some useful things needed to distinguish between a good article and bad one.

- We got introduced to different ways of approaching research and how to use databases in our library like PubMed, which was useful in other classes.
- The content was extremely important to us as future clinicians. The guest lectures were great additions as well- especially the librarian who guided our learning in research databases.
- Additionally - I liked when the librarians came to teach us about PubMed, CINAHL, and Cochrane! They were super helpful!

### **USER INSTRUCTION – BIO104**

BIO104 refinement of “The Temperate Forest of New England Species Report,” a.k.a. “Critter on a Card,” continues. This is a class that many first-year students are required to take, so it is a critical introduction to Library Services in preparation for their careers at UNE. Evaluation of student papers indicated students can locate reliable or peer-reviewed information, however, teaching of citation formatting skills still needs to be addressed and revised.

In fall 2019, prior to the transition to remote instruction, students followed along during the Library Lab session and completed a literature-cited page before they left the in-library Library Lab. After spring break 2020, asynchronous Zoom was the instructional mode used by librarians. It continued to be the mode of instruction for fall 2020 and spring 2021.

Students submitted their literature-cited page and almost all of the citations were incorrect. Students either did not pay attention to the instructions, or the instructions were not clear to them. As a result, lab instructors made corrections to their citations for that first exercise. It was very time consuming and shifted the effort from the students to instructors. Then students were asked to do peer editing and review for the whole paper. This helped them use better citation formatting. The final papers were fairly good. Research & Teaching Librarians still need to figure out how to get the students to participate remotely the same way they do in-person.

### **VIRTUAL REALITY PROJECT**

UNE is an early adopter of an innovative teaching tool that uses virtual reality (VR) technology to instill empathy in medical and other health professions students. The VR Project has been ongoing since November 2016 via grant funding from the United States National Library of Medicine (NLM). UNE Library Services continued the project by renewing the Embodied Labs (EL) software license after funding from NLM ended two years ago. From May 5, 2020, through April 30, 2021, UNE completed the fifth year of the educational project that employs virtual reality technology to teach empathy to medical and other health professions students, and to familiarize students with NLM information resources related to older adult health. After spring break 2020, Embodied Labs adapted its software to provide embodied experiences via synchronous Zoom instead of via Oculus Rift headsets.

Designed to provide an experiential learning opportunity as an interactive experience, it was unknown if the less-interactive streaming experience necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic would still be effective. Data from 47 physician assistant (PA) students who experienced the lab in-person in 2019 were compared to data from the 2020 cohort of 50 students who experienced streaming VR. The results showed that VR delivered in-person or by streaming video is effective in providing future PAs understanding and empathy regarding macular degeneration and hearing



loss as presented in the Alfred Lab. Future research could explore whether or not VR learning experiences translate to better patient care.

### **COMMUNITY, EQUITY, AND DIVERSITY LIBRARY RESOURCE INITIATIVE (CEDLRI)**

[CEDLRI](#) is a crowdsourced community resource, and recommendation of resources for inclusion are welcome. This resource was created in an effort to provide the UNE community with resources that inform and inspire action to support inclusive campuses and extended learning sites. Indications are that this website is being used. There have been many recommendations for resource inclusion from the UNE community. Assessment of use in classes may be helpful.

### **USER INSTRUCTION – TOTAL NUMBER OF SESSIONS AND STUDENTS**

In AY 2020-21 Research and Teaching Librarians taught 75 user instruction sessions to 2,051 undergraduate and graduate students across all six colleges. These numbers were down slightly from the previous year. Zoom was the primary method by which user instruction was delivered during the pandemic. Zoom fatigue may have played a role in the decrease in the number of user instruction sessions. However, results from faculty indicate that the efforts to improve student learning and retention continue to be effective.

## **Appendix B:**

### **Update on Three-Year New Program Reviews and Periodic Program Reviews**

#### **Three-Year New Program Reviews**

After their third full year in the catalog, new programs, including undergraduate majors and minors and graduate programs, need to undergo an evaluation that entails comparing the data and projections they made in their Feasibility Study and Statement of Activities Pro Forma budget to their current status, and addressing any modifications they will make. For more details, go to the [UNE Academic Program Review](#) web page and click on the resources on that web page that are listed under the “New Program Development and Program Revisions Resources” subheading.

In AY 2021-22, the following programs are conducting a three-year new program review: CAS’s Biochemistry, Health, Medicine, and Society, Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship, and Special Education (minor).

This January 2022, the following programs will receive advanced notification before their AY 2022-23 three-year new program review: CAS’s Data Science, Global Studies, and Ocean Food Systems.

#### **Periodic Program Reviews**

In AY 2021-22, the following programs are conducting a program review: CAS’s Education (all programs, including the Special Education minor, which overlaps with its three-year new program review), Medical Biology and Biological Sciences (majors and minors, and graduate program), Psychology (including Animal Behavior and Neuroscience), Sociology, Applied Social and Cultural Studies, Anthropology, Health, Medicine, and Society (which overlaps with its three-year new program review), and Women’s and Gender Studies; CGPS’s Education (programs with specialized accreditation) and Public Health; and WCHP’s Nurse Anesthesia, Occupational Therapy, and Physician Assistant.

This January 2022, the following programs will receive advanced notification before their AY 2022-23 program reviews: CAS’s Communications, History, Interdisciplinary Studies in the Humanities, Philosophy, Political Science, Global Studies (which will overlap with its three-year new program review), and Health, Law, and Policy; and WCHP’s Public Health.

For more details, go to the [UNE Academic Program Review](#) web page and click on the resources on that web page that are listed under the “Program Review Documents” subheading.