



INNOVATION FOR A HEALTHIER PLANET

January 10, 2020

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

Re: Response to 2018-19 Assessment Report

Dear UAC:

The purpose of this letter is to provide a formal response from my office to your UAC Report on the Status of Assessment 2018-19 at UNE. I want to once again commend you all for the very thorough work represented in this report and the diligence with which you individually and collectively contribute to a culture of assessment at UNE. Likewise, it is clear that UNE embraces assessment as a practice and culture, and that every year you add additional groups to the assessment process as well as continually improving the assessment and continual improvement work of the groups who are now doing this work as a routine part of their professional activities.

The report itself is very comprehensive, and I reviewed and approved it in draft form prior to this letter, so I have no additional comments or questions about the body of the report itself. Outlined below are my responses to your Final Recommendations as detailed in the submitted report.

Recommendation 1.1. I agree with this recommendation. Bringing all student-facing units into the fold, especially the non-academic, co-curricular programs, will be an important next step in completing the implementation of assessment and creating a university-wide assessment culture focused on continual improvement and student success.

Recommendation 1.2. I agree with the recommendation, and my office is positioned to assist with and support this goal in any way we can.

Recommendation 1.3. I agree with this recommendation. This is an excellent suggestion for improvement of the UAC procedures, which should lead to richer feedback and more focused information on implementation, and even better informed analysis by the UAC of the impact of assessment practices, as well as the ability for the UAC to broker the sharing of best practices across the university landscape. It will also provide a more specific framework for the programs to follow in their assessment practices, by asking them to delineate their key action plans and related outcomes.

Recommendation 1.4. I agree with this recommendation. It will be very important to establish and support benchmarks for student learning outcomes that are consistent and appropriate across all reporting units.

Recommendation 1.5. I agree with this recommendation. Please complete this work as soon as practical.

Recommendation 2.1. I agree with this recommendation. My office is fully supportive of working with UAC, IR, and the individual colleges and programs to develop a more comprehensive database for alumni. This is important for the university on a number of fronts, but will certainly assist the UAC in its work as well. This should be a high priority for all stakeholders.

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Recommendation 2.2. I agree with this recommendation. This is a challenging component to the work, and is also a challenge in many other areas. Students are clearly over-surveyed based on our prior analysis and direct feedback from students themselves. We need to greatly reduce the number of surveys they, and other constituents at UNE, are asked to participate in each year. Surveys could be combined so that lots of smaller surveys become one or a few larger surveys that satisfy multiple needs. The quality of the surveys is also uneven, and so UNE should develop a set of guidelines and a process for survey approval, construction and implementation. Finally, as noted surveys are not the most effective tool for assessment, and so prudence should be used in over-relying on surveys by units as their principal source of information. Conversely, surveys are critically important for certain aspects of student success as well as other university needs and responsibilities, such as the NSSE and Rankin surveys this year. So a balance of a smaller number of high quality, appropriate, sequenced, and timely surveys is an important goal and a major project that UAC can contribute to and help facilitate over the next year or two. This should also be a high collective priority but is not a UAC-specific project but one they should continue to advocate for as part of their work.

Recommendation 2.3. I agree with this recommendation. With the new leadership of CETL and a full-time director, plus other investments in CETL and its programs, this will be a great partner and resource for the work of the UAC and its stakeholders going forward.

Recommendation 2.4. I agree with this recommendation in general. We do have several new and upgraded platforms such as the EAB suite of programs, and do plan to update the LMS system, which will be important components of a set of enterprise tools to support assessment. But an underlying component of the faculty request for more technology and software solutions might be better served by support of faculty and programs in following best practices for assessment, rather than a technology solution per se. So the engagement of UAC, CETL and other human resources with programs that are seeking to improve their assessment will be an important component of overall assessment advancement at UNE. More importantly, in seeking new technology, it is important to identify the core problem or challenge that requires a solution, ensuring that technology is the most appropriate recourse to address that problem, and then seeking an enterprise system or at least a universally used smaller software solution, rather than ad hoc having individual units seek various software tools that may create an uneven or mismatched landscape. UAC, with assistance from the Academic Technology committee and others who can help better identify and define the problem and look for the best options, will be the best way forward for this area, rather than each unit seeking to solve its local problems individually and in isolation.

Thank you again for all your day-to-day hard work last year, your work to compile and produce this report and its recommendations, and for the excellent annual presentation of your work to the UNE leadership and academic community last fall. I greatly look forward to working with you and with our broader community of colleagues at UNE to continue building and sustaining an embedded culture of assessment that directly impacts best practices and, most importantly, improves overall student success.

Sincerely,

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

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