



INNOVATION FOR A HEALTHIER PLANET

January 10, 2021

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

Re: Response to 2019-20 Assessment Report

Dear Jen and UAC:

The purpose of this letter is to provide a formal response to your UAC Report on the Status of Assessment 2019-20 at UNE. I want to once again commend you all for the very thorough and hard work represented in this report and the diligence with which you individually and collectively contribute to a culture of assessment at UNE. And we truly have created a culture of assessment that is in large part due to your efforts and impact, but also speaks volumes about the dedication and thoughtfulness of our faculty, who collectively always keep our students and their success top of mind.

I want to particularly commend you for continuing your work this past nine months despite the onslaught of Covid and all its impacts and ramifications to UNE. In addition, I applaud your nimbleness in pivoting to specifically assess the changes in teaching and learning necessitated by Covid, both to capture these impacts and to provide feedback to students, faculty and professional staff on what we have learned, including potentially longer-term modification of our teaching and learning practices that have emerged as effective tools, regardless of the pandemic situation, but which were initially required and implemented in response to it. These “lessons learned” are very important to capture and highlight, lest we just go back to pre-Covid practices “just because” rather than learning what we can from our collective experiences and modifying our tools and practices accordingly.

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 Report and your Final Recommendations as detailed in the submitted report.

### **Prior Recommendations and Progress:**

I commend your work on prior and ongoing Recommendations 1.1 through 1.5. You made substantial progress despite Covid, and I agree with your decision to postpone fully implementing Recommendation 1.4 and delaying completion of Recommendation 1.5.

Recommendations 2.1 through 2.4. UNE made considerable progress on alumni data as outlined in Recommendation 2.1, but as you noted we need to move from more distributed ad hoc collection of data to more organized, central data as we continue this project. UNE also made progress on Recommendation 2.2, surveys, and has taken several positive steps to reduce overlap, conflicts, redundancies, and overall survey fatigue by consolidating and coordinating surveys better. More work needs to be done here, but considering Covid this area showed great improvement. UNE made some progress, as noted, on Recommendation 2.3, but as noted some of these plans got delayed or postponed due to Covid and resulting resource constraints. This will be an important area to continue to improve on as we go forward. Recommendation 2.4 anticipated a series of resource improvements that will continue to be implemented into the current and next academic year, such as the new

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LMS and other resources, and collectively these will have a major impact on teaching and learning, as well as providing important new tools for accreditation and assessment processes and data analyses.

### **Spring and Summer 2020 Surveys:**

The UAC, working with CETL, IR and other partners, quickly developed a comprehensive survey on the impact of Covid and its changes to our teaching and learning landscape. It was extremely important to capture these changes and their impacts while they were occurring, and it would have been an opportunity lost to not have recognized this need. I thank the UAC and all its partners, as well as our students, faculty, and professional staff, for capturing this information both as part of its activities and role in assessment and on behalf of the university as part of our overall Covid response and assessment of its impact. The data from these surveys are highly informative, and have been shared with the UNE community. These data also formed the basis for a virtual poster presentation at the recent 2020 NECHE meeting. The results of these surveys strongly resonate with the results from this year's (and prior) NSSE surveys and the recent Rankin Campus Climate survey, indicating from students the high regard they hold, and critical importance they recognize for faculty teaching and engagement, and likewise the results highlight the central commitment faculty have toward our students and their success, despite the challenges of Covid and of moving to Zoom and other remote or hybrid teaching and learning modes. Without reiterating all that was presented in the report about these surveys, this is a treasure trove of information that we will continue to analyze and build on going forward, including follow-up surveys for this academic year as we continue to work under the conditions imposed by the pandemic.

### **This Year's UAC Recommendations:**

Recommendations 1.1 through 1.3. I agree that the UAC should continue the work on these prior recommendations going forward, which focus on continuing efforts for incremental improvement in the these key areas of expanding support unit assessment, continually improving resources, and continually updating the handbook and other sources. Picking up the work on prior Recommendations 1.4 and 1.5 will also be important.

Recommendation 1.4. I agree that the UAC should expand its demographic analysis for future surveys to better understand how individual groups within the larger community may differ in their needs or performance that may lead to improved and more targeted intervention and resources.

Recommendations 2.1 through 2.4. I agree with the UAC on these recommendations for improving student success and its assessment should the pandemic continue in a way that directly impacts teaching and learning in a similar manner to current circumstances. The specific recommendations, which were developed in response to the data from the recent surveys, are sound and directly address the key elements that students and faculty focused on in determining what works and what could be improved in the current hybrid and remote approaches to teaching and learning.

### **College and Support Unit Assessment Reports:**

Each college provided a detailed, thoughtful and targeted analysis of its own assessment landscape, with sound summaries of their current data and appropriate and innovative strategies for addressing continual improvement tailored to their particular programs and teaching and learning environments. Going forward, it would be useful for the UAC to review these in more detail and provide specific feedback to each unit (and in its annual report) in response to these unit reports as a follow up to their submissions, at a point in the assessment cycle that would allow the units to make any adjustments or provide responses prior to their next analysis and report. This will then fully close the loop in the assessment cycle.

Thank you again for all your day-to-day hard work last year, for the extra effort you put into the Covid-related surveys and their analysis, 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 be 'JH', written in a cursive style.

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