



April 25, 2019

To: Deans  
Chairpersons  
CAA  
CASL

From: Jay D. Gatrell, Provost & VPAA

CC: Karla Sanders, Academic Success Center

**RE: Program Assessment for Undergraduate Majors**

For more than a decade, EIU's assessment regime for undergraduate programs has been highly centralized. Over the past few years though, the amount of administrative resources dedicated to assessment have diminished as faculty workload has increased. For that reason, I am writing you to begin a campus dialogue that leads to a more intentional more faculty-centered assessment framework that recognizes the curricular coherence of the University's General Education program and the unique knowledge, skills, and dispositional factors that shape academic disciplines, as well as the professions. Additionally, reflecting on our current practices as they relate to assessment is fully consistent with expectations of any comprehensive continuous improvement initiative. In short, does our current approach meet the needs of our programs, assure student learning, and/or meaningfully inform curricular innovation? As part of any reconsideration of assessment at EIU, the campus dialogue should examine current macro-level assessment practices, as well as the proper locus of control for assessing University Learning Goals (ULGs).

In Fall 2019, I will be charging a committee comprised of a faculty member from each college (n=4), the chair and vice-chair of CAA (n=2), a representative of the General Education sub-committee (n=1), a department chair (n=1), the general education coordinator (n=1), and all associate deans (n=5). The committee will be convened and chaired by Dr. Karla Sanders who will serve as an *ex officio* member. The committee's charge will be to provide recommendations to the Office of Academic Affairs, no later than December 1, 2019, that consider:

- Repositioning the administrative feedback for program assessment closer to the programs—specifically in the college dean's offices;
- Honoring the work of faculty in externally accredited programs and developing a streamlined reporting process for these programs;
- Creating a more limited framework for the ULGs that may focus on assessing EIU's General Education program [*Note: The primary curricular reference in the Undergraduate Catalog to ULGs resides in the general education description.*];

- Sharpening the assessment plans of academic majors by emphasizing program-specific learning outcomes only;
- Acknowledging that the disciplines and professions inherently engage in higher level (yet discipline specific) activities that are informed by national standards that necessarily extend from, complement, and reinforce the ULGs;
- The merit of a university template versus a program defined reporting structure—if a template is determined to be appropriate the committee would create the template;
- The utility of an annual, biennial or triennial reporting program cycle, as well as assessment plan revisions, that is supported by annual data collection and a campus-wide archive of assessment plans, reports, and feedback; and
- The need, if any, for an *ad hoc* assessment oversight committee to supplement the work of CAA, the academic programs, and the General Education Sub-Committee.

In an effort to begin the process of examining the above, I am requesting all programs continue to implement existing assessment plans and collect annual data. However, with respect to the current 2019 program report cycle, no program reports are necessary (i.e., no submissions in June). As such, the current biennial reporting timeline is paused for the current year—and the reporting timeline will be postponed by a single academic year for all undergraduate programs. The revised reporting framework (which may or may not be biennial going forward—TBD) and structure will resume with the 2019-2020 academic year and be shared with the campus community prior to February 1, 2020. Finally, the creation of the new General Education Sub-Committee, the anticipated appointment of an inaugural General Education Coordinator, and the scheduled work of the committee requires the suspension of the *ad hoc* Committee for the Assessment on Student Learning (CASL) for the academic year 2019-2020 and depending on the recommendations of the assessment process review committee CASL may be eliminated or reconfigured.

To avoid any potential confusion, I would like to emphasize that this memo deals solely with issues of assessing undergraduate degree programs and the ULGs. As such, graduate program assessment should continue according to regular practices. I will, however, ask Dean Hendrickson to consult with CGS in the forthcoming year to evaluate program procedures and assessment metrics.

In closing, I thank you for your time and would encourage you to contact me should you have any questions.