ESSENTIAL LEARNING & ASSESSMENT REVIEW COMMITTEE
2015 Report Executive Summary

The purpose of the Essential Learning & Assessment Review Committee (ELARC) is to ensure the regular and timely consideration of data from assessments of student learning and the use of these data in setting goals and making recommendations to improve teaching and learning at UW-Whitewater. Work is focused around the LEAP essential learning outcomes, adopted in Spring 2010 as our campus definition of the learning we expect for all bachelors degree recipients.

Assessment data (related to student learning and LEAP) flow up from courses, departments, colleges, and other units. ELARC reviews assessment data and integrates findings from across campus using LEAP as the central organizing framework. ELARC distills findings into a report of assessment highlights and recommended actions that reflect attention to blending the curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular student experiences. The recommendations can serve as a guide for allocation of resources so that our campus as a whole works toward common assessment goals.

The following emerging themes and recommendations are based on a comprehensive review of assessment data. Summaries of the data are available in the full ELARC report www.uww.edu/acadaff/assessment/ELARC.

Emerging Themes over ELARC’s Three Years

✓ Students have difficulty evaluating information and evidence, integrating across courses and contexts, and sometimes with retention and application of skills and knowledge to new problems. To date, however, most of the evidence comes from comparing students in earlier years with different students in later years. A longitudinal approach of tracking the same students’ learning over time could provide useful information about how these skills change, if some students face greater challenges than others in mastering them, and the kinds of instructional experiences that support the development of these essential skills.

✓ Assessment results may be influenced by the quality of assignments given to students and the scaffolding and supports students receive. These are areas to explore, perhaps by offering opportunities for conversations and/or faculty/staff development.

✓ Academic assessment efforts would advance from a more complete and strategic curricular mapping to show how the essential learning outcomes are addressed, practiced, and assessed across the curriculum and co-curriculum.

✓ There is a need for greater visibility of assessment efforts and assessment ‘successes’ across campus. Sharing assessment strategies, tools and results:
  ▪ contributes to a better understanding of our students’ learning,
  ▪ provides information and support for faculty/staff,
  ▪ helps students understand why we focus on specific skills, and
  ▪ provides valuable information to prospective students, parents, and to the public.
ELARC Committee Recommendations for 2015-2017

➢ **Recommendation #1**
Assessment work is vital to our understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement in all areas of student learning—curricular and co-curricular. To be most meaningful, assessment work should be ongoing, occur as an integral part of campus life, and involve active engagement of faculty, staff, and students. To **enhance a positive culture of assessment** that facilitates engagement, we recommend that units create ways to acknowledge and reward faculty, staff, and students for their work on assessment, and that UW-W expand its array of annual university-wide awards to include assessment awards recognizing both individuals (a faculty, academic staff, university staff member) and one or more groups for distinguished contributions to the assessment of student learning.

➢ **Recommendation #2**
As the university faces new fiscal challenges and greater budget uncertainty, we encourage institutional decision-makers to remain mindful of the centrality of assessment in university operation. Federal and state agencies and accrediting organizations will continue to monitor and review outcomes of academic assessment efforts—necessitating a **continued commitment of time and resources that support the completion of informative and useful assessment of student learning**.

➢ **Recommendation #3**
Campus should develop rubrics that **define learning** and the progression of learning for the essential learning outcomes. The campus should continue the good work that has been done in this area, with a particular focus on a) enhancing awareness of the five existing rubrics among faculty, staff, and students through professional development and marketing activities and b) increasing the integration of these rubrics into instruction and assessment across the curriculum and co-curriculum. In addition, the committee recommends that we continue to develop new campus rubrics for other key essential learning outcomes including quantitative literacy. The AAC&U VALUE rubrics can be used as guides or starting points.

➢ **Recommendation #4**
Units should develop strategies to **track student performance over time**. Collection and evaluation of data will allow units to understand difficulties students have with evaluation, integration, and application (those areas our data have indicated are difficult for UW-W students). Providing professional development resources to address student learning in these areas will allow campus units to examine courses, curriculum, organizational culture, etc. and to explore possible revisions needed for greater student learning and achievement.

The 2015 ELARC Final Report identified many areas of progress as well as work still needed. View the full report at the ELARC webpage [www.uww.edu/acadaff/assessment/ELARC](http://www.uww.edu/acadaff/assessment/ELARC).

Reporting schedule (see 2015 ELARC Final Report for instructions).

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