



Spring 2020 Report on Assessment

April 2020

Executive Summary

The full report is divided into two sections. The first details current efforts by the faculty Assessment Committee to implement changes to St. Olaf's assessment program, both for general education and the assessment cycle for departments and programs. The second section summarizes the process and results of the four-year assessment cycle activity for 2018-19: the assessment action year for all academic programs. Key items from each section are summarized below.

Changes to the St. Olaf Academic Assessment Program

The Committee worked with the GE Task Force in December to recruit and assign teams of faculty (and staff where appropriate) to create Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) for the sixteen requirements of the new OLE Core general education curriculum.

- The broader faculty as well as select staff and students provided comments on the draft ILOs, and the Assessment Committee worked to integrate comments as appropriate.
- As of the writing of this report, 4 ILO documents have been approved by the Curriculum Committee and an additional 10 are under Curriculum Committee review. Following Curriculum Committee approval, the documents will be presented to the faculty for a vote.

In addition to the ILO development process, the Assessment Committee utilized FLC Professional Development Grant funds to design and host a faculty workshop in January for scoring first-year writing student assignments.

- The motivation behind this workshop was to pilot a method of direct assessment using student work samples as a potential new model for general education assessment.
- Feedback from the eight faculty participants was overwhelmingly positive, and many saw the experience as an important professional development opportunity.
- The remainder of this academic year, and likely part of the next given the current uncertainties, will be devoted to finalizing GE ILOs and introducing the new decennial assessment cycle for departments and programs (described below).
 - Next year's Assessment Committee will undertake further reflection on the feasibility of scaling up the GE assessment method piloted in January once the new ILOs are approved.

The other major area of revision to St. Olaf's academic assessment program concerns the previous four-year assessment cycle.

- The Assessment Committee has developed a new decennial assessment cycle for department and program-level assessment.
- The full report details the general guiding principles of the decennial assessment cycle and how it will operate in parallel with the program review cycle.
- The decennial assessment cycle model will allow for greater faculty control of assessment and better tailoring of assessment to department and program needs.
- The Assessment Committee intended to workshop the decennial cycle with department chairs and program directors at the March 19th Academic Leadership meeting, but the COVID-19 disruptions necessitated postponement of that meeting. The Assessment Committee plans to reschedule their presentation for an Academic Leadership meeting in the fall.

2018-19 Assessment Action Year

In accordance with St. Olaf's four-year data collection schedule, the focus of program-level assessment in 2018-19 was the assessment action year.

- The intention of this year in the cycle is to provide all academic departments and programs with time for reflection on past assessment activities and implementation of changes in response to assessment findings.
 - Departments and programs took a wide variety of approaches in responding to assessment findings during the action year; the full report summarizes the types of action projects completed and provides details examples from six departments/programs.
- Nevertheless, the Assessment Committee received reports from just over half of all departments and programs.
 - This is a much lower response rate than the previous action year, and likely reflects some of the issues with the four-year assessment cycle that the new decennial cycle hopes to address by encouraging more long-term planning around assessment and offering greater flexibility for reporting deadlines.
 - While some requirements will need to be met by all departments/programs to ensure continued compliance with Higher Learning Commission (HLC) accreditation criteria, the new decennial cycle may actually allow us to provide the HLC with better evidence of the use of assessment information to improve student learning if departments and programs are able to design their own assessment plans based on current concerns.