

Faculty Senate Proposal for an Ad-hoc Assessment Committee

- request for the establishment of an ad-hoc assessment committee for the 2020/21 academic year.

Why?

Faculty oversight/guidance/support for academic assessment is officially under the purview of the Teaching, Learning, and Assessment (TLA) committee, a committee of the Faculty Senate. TLA has been focused on the teaching and learning parts of its mission and has not been able to focus on assessment practices; this has created a void of faculty engagement in assessment. As assessment becomes more fully integrated into the everyday practice of higher ed teaching, faculty engagement in the processes of assessment, in the practice of assessment, and in the use of assessment is critical. The revised (2020) NWCCU accreditation standards specifically call for the engagement of faculty in the assessment process:

1.C.5 The institution engages in an effective system of assessment to evaluate the quality of learning in its programs. The institution recognizes the central role of faculty to establish curricula, assess student learning, and improve instructional programs.

What?

Initially, an ad-hoc assessment committee would be asked, during the fall semester, to review current assessment practices and templates using peer-reviewed assessment literature as guidance. The committee would then assume responsibility for the review and feedback of biennial assessment reports in the spring 2021 semester. In doing so, the committee can help identify needed training around the practice of assessment. During the subsequent year, the committee could help design and potentially implement the training, along with the continued review and feedback of biennial assessment reports.

Who?

It is important that the general faculty have confidence in the faculty who are members of this committee. As such, the current practice of Faculty Senate Executive Committee selecting committee members would be ideal. Representation from each college as well as a diversity of assessment experience would be helpful. This might include experience with external accrediting practices as well as internal assessment options.

Proof of concept

WSU has a tradition of faculty participation in the program review process. Members of the FSEC have supported the review process by reading extensive materials (self-study, site visit report, faculty, and dean responses), engaging the chairs in a discussion of the review process and finally making recommendations to the Provost. It is an important precedent of faculty engagement in assessment.