UMD Liberal Education Program Assessment of Student Learning
Annual Report for 2019-20

Completed November 2019
by the Liberal Education Subcommittee

Three of the 10 Liberal Education Program (LEP) categories reported assessment results for the 2018-19 academic year: Oral Communication, Natural Sciences, and Global Perspectives. Faculty teaching courses in these categories submitted course assessment reports and course data was aggregated at the category level by the Liberal Education Program Data Coordinator.

**Category Assessment Reports Summary:**
- Faculty teaching courses in the **Oral Communications** category developed category rubrics Spring 2015; only courses taught in Spring of 2016 were included in the initial category results in Fall of 2016.
- Assessment of courses in the **Natural Sciences** category first took place in Fall of 2016 based on courses taught in Spring of 2016. The evaluation rubric was developed in Fall of 2015. In this category, faculty were asked to submit an assessment plan outlining tentative assessment methods and standards; at the end of the semester, the faculty were asked to submit the results.
- The **Global Perspectives** category was first assessed in Fall of 2016 based, as above, on courses taught in the Spring of 2016. The evaluation rubric was developed in Fall of 2015. Faculty were asked to submit an assessment plan outlining tentative assessment methods and standards; at the end of the semester, the faculty were asked to submit the results.
- This is the first assessment report that includes data from the three-year reporting cycle. Every course listed in each category must report assessment data for at least one semester in the three year cycle. Non-compliance may result in removal of the course from the Liberal Education Program.

In the assessment reporting, faculty identify their courses as either introductory or advanced, and conduct assessment using the related performance level from the rubric.

For this year of assessment reporting, only courses in these four categories offered in 2018-19 were expected to submit assessment results. Rates of reporting per category:

- **Oral Communications:**
  - In the “Oral Communications” sub-category, assessment data were received for 5 courses. These reports represented assessment data for 3720 students at Level 1.
  - In the “Languages” sub-category, 26 reports for 24 distinct courses were received. These reports represented assessment data for 504 students at Level 1 and 137 students at the advanced level.

- **Natural Sciences:** Assessment data were received for 24 courses. These reports represented assessment data for 2664 students for SLO 1, 1343 for SLOs 2 and 3 at Level 1.

- **Global Perspective:** Assessment data were received for 51 courses. These reports represented assessment data for 2908 students at Level 1 and data for 417 students at the advanced level.

- Category-level data represents the percentage of total student work assessed that meets or exceeds each performance level:
  - **Oral Communication**
  - **Global Communication:**
At the Intro/Level 1 level, the percentage of students who met or exceeded performance was 91.7% for SLO 1; and 91.6% for SLO 2; and 90.1% for SLO 3.

**Languages:**
- At the Intro/Level 1 level, the percentage of students who met or exceeded performance was 93.8% for SLO 1; and 91.5% for SLO 2; and 94.2% for SLO 3.
- At the Advanced/Level 3 level, the percentage of students who met or exceeded performance was 96.8% for SLO 1; and 95% for SLO 2; and 95.5% for SLO 3.

**Natural Sciences:**
- At the Intro/Level 1 level, the percentage of students who met or exceeded performance was 84.0% for SLO 1; and 82.4% for SLO 2; and 86.4% for SLO 3.

**Global Perspectives:**
- At the Intro/Level 1 level, the percentage of students who met or exceeded performance was 90.8% for SLO 1; and 89.3% for SLO 2; and 89.1% for SLO 3; and 89.3% for SLO 4.
- At the Advanced/Level 3 level, the percentage of students who met or exceeded performance was 87.3% for SLO 1; and 87.1% for SLO 2; and 87.1% for SLO 3; and 85.1% for SLO 4.

Category reports indicate faculty primarily rely on direct measures of assessing student work, such as quizzes, exam questions, lab reports, presentations, speeches, conversations, written assignments, and essays. Across all the category reports, faculty rely on discussion forums, case studies, creative projects, and group projects in smaller numbers.

Within each category, nearly all faculty review course assessment data to determine ways to improve teaching and learning. Based on the faculty response, it is evident that the practice of discussing Liberal Education course assessment at the department level is uneven across campus; some departments meet formally at least annually; others share reports virtually; still others have no practices in place. For some faculty, submission of the assessment report for their course is all that is done.

The assessment reports for these categories from 2016 noted the following:
- A need for additional support beyond a single PAL
- A way to share best practices across campus

The greater involvement of the Subcommittee members mentioned below has helped to address the first recommendation. Based on our recommendations below, however, it is clear that a way to share best practices across campus remains an area of need.

**Liberal Education Subcommittee Interpretations and Recommendations for LEP Assessment:**
- **Course assessment practices:** Overall, the Liberal Education Subcommittee is content with the assessment practices currently in place. We agree with the 2016-17 report recommendation that the subcommittee should review the LEP assessment practices during or after Spring 2022, once all categories have completed full 3-year program assessment cycles.

- **Course assessment report submissions:** This year was the first year of mandatory reporting for all courses in each category. Courses that do no report may be removed from the Liberal Education
Category results and interpretations: The Liberal Education Subcommittee reviewed the category results compiled from the scores reported by faculty teaching the courses. The subcommittee finds the results reported in the Oral Communication and Languages, Natural Sciences, and Global Perspectives Categories to indicate satisfactory student performance overall. Concerns were raised in a couple of areas:

1) Some assessment seems based more on grades rather than analysis of content
2) There is some resistance across campus to assessment

Based on the data, the subcommittee recommends providing at least one training opportunity in spring semesters for faculty teaching in those categories with assessment reports due the following semester.

Faculty participation in category discussion sessions: These discussion sessions, held in the fall, are designed to facilitate information sharing. Members of the Liberal Education Subcommittee began attending the meetings in fall of 2019 and will continue to do so. However, the success and value of these discussion sessions is limited by low attendance numbers. Two sessions were held in Fall of 2019; nobody came to the first session and, exclusive of subcommittee members, the second meeting had fewer than 10 attendees.

The recommendation is that the Liberal Education Subcommittee revisit the purpose of these meetings and the kind of reflection questions posed. This, in combination with a more clear communication of the purpose, will help faculty to better understand the benefits of participation. This is particularly important now that reporting is required for all courses that are included in the Liberal Education program. Some faculty who attended believed that attendance at the meeting was required to be in compliance with the Liberal Education assessment requirements.

In order to encourage participation in the Fall of 2020 reflection meetings, the Subcommittee suggests organizing meetings at the collegiate level; these will be hosted by the Liberal Education Subcommittee representatives and will be described as encouraging “peer-review” and reflection. The hope is that smaller, collegiate-level meetings will foster greater buy-in across campus. It is important to note that collegiate-level discussions will transition back to broader, campus-level discussions which the Subcommittee feels better represent the spirit of the Liberal Education program mission and the way that the category courses are taught across UMD.

In the 2017 report, the subcommittee recommended additional opportunities to inform faculty about our LEP or assessment practices. It is clear that work remains to be done to build awareness of these practices and how they relate to program-level assessment.

We recommend that assessment training be provided as part of the new faculty onboarding processes.

Liberal Education Subcommittee involvement in LEP assessment processes: In the 2018 report, the subcommittee acknowledged that the group should take a more active role in facilitating program assessment work and that the subcommittee members should more directly liaison with the colleges and schools they represent to assure that faculty understand both the assessment practice and the reporting system. Over the past year, more communication about changes to the Liberal Education program have come from the Subcommittee chair and committee representatives. The
meetings and discussions proposed will further the centrality of the Subcommittee to the Assessment process.

The subcommittee is satisfied with the information on the Liberal Education Data Coordinator’s category assessment reports. Using the category reports, the Liberal Education Subcommittee will continue to complete this annual assessment report for Faculty Senate, Faculty Assembly, the Assessment Subcommittee, and Academic Affairs administration. This report will be made available to campus members in the subcommittee’s shared governance folder and on the Liberal Education Assessment website.