CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY FULLERTON™

2014-15 University Assessment Report

University Assessment Report: 2014-2015
California State University, Fullerton

The 2014-2015 academic year has been a productive year for assessment at California State University, Fullerton (CSUF). Alongside the continuation of existing vibrant assessment of curricular and co-curricular activities, several changes in terms of assessment development, infrastructure, and support have taken place on campus. These changes include an expansion of assessment to administrative divisions, an establishment of a "network of assessment", and an increased commitment to support assessment efforts at all levels of the university. In addition, a centralized assessment management system, Compliance Assist, was used for the first time to collect assessment activities and results. This report is intended to provide the campus community with an update of the progress, as well as the status of assessment across divisions as indicated by their annual assessment reports.

Progess Update

Assessment has traditionally been conducted by units in Academic Affairs and Student Affairs. As all university divisions contribute to student learning experiences (directly or indirectly), assessment, with the ultimate goal of improving practice, is now a campus-wide endeavor. The Division of Information Technology (IT) joined this effort in AY 14-15, resulting in a total of three divisions that participated in assessment efforts in AY 14-15. The other university divisions will be gradually included in this process in upcoming years.

The university assessment report last year indicated that the assessment status, faculty/staff expertise, and resources were uneven across campus. As such, the Provost's Office committed resources to revitalize the central assessment office in the Office of Academic Programs, and to appoint ten faculty assessment liaisons to serve as the leaders of assessment for the nine colleges (1 liaison per college, with the exception of 2 for HSS). Designated leaders in Student Affairs (n=2) and Information Technology (n=1) also took on the responsibility to coordinate the assessment efforts within their divisions. All together, the 13 assessment liaisons (Appendix 1) worked closely to develop a "network of assessment" across the three divisions. The chair

of the senate's Assessment and Educational Effectiveness Committee (AEEC) also worked closely with the liaisons to communicate university policy updates, and provide appropriate support. The hard work of these dedicated individuals contributed tremendously to the accomplishments that are detailed in this report.

University level commitment aside, all colleges and divisions also provided support to establish assessment committees or identify assessment coordinators at the college/division or department/unit level. These committees and coordinators worked at the frontline of assessment, implementing the university's new six-step assessment process, and communicating their units' needs to the university through the assessment liaisons. Without these faculty and staff, the university would not have been able to move forward on assessment this year.

To address the differing levels of assessment expertise on campus, the Office of Assessment and Educational Effectiveness (OAEE) offered several customized workshops and university-wide events on various aspects of assessment (see www.fullerton. edu/assessment/training_ workshops/ for details). A total of 546 attendees participated in these training events, with 95% of

attendees finding them "useful/ very useful," and 84% perceiving them as "effective/very effective". The Office of Academic Programs also supported over 20 faculty members across disciplines to attend WASC, AAC&U and ABET conferences and workshops to further develop their assessment expertise.

Prior to AY 14-15, assessment reporting on campus had been done by completing Word-based templates, which did not easily create an accessible historical record. Completing a separate document every year fails to highlight both the continuous nature of assessment, and more importantly, the step of "closing the loop" – turning assessment results into improvement actions. In AY 14-15, a centralized online assessment management system, Compliance Assist, was adopted to collect assessment information. The system was customized to provide a simple information documentation interface aligned with the six-step assessment process. All units in Student Affairs and Information Technology, and all undergraduate programs in Academic Programs were required to submit their annual assessment report using this system by June 15, 2015. The units were strongly recommended to provide information on all steps of the assessment process for at least one outcome.

Six-Step Assessment Process

To briefly recap, the six-step assessment process (Figure 1) was established by AEEC in spring 2014, as part of the university Assessment and Educational Effectiveness Plan. The plan detailed the responsibilities of university constituents on assessment, described a campus-wide assessment process, and suggested a plan to promote an assessment culture at CSUF (www.fullerton.edu/assessment/assessment_at_csuf).
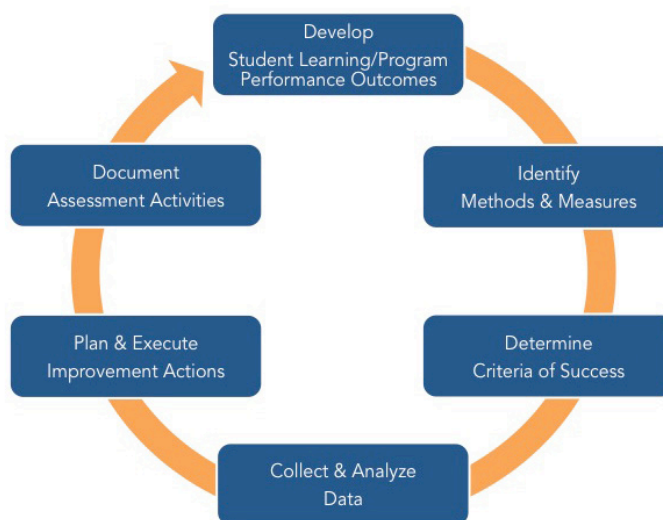

Figure 1. University-Wide Assessment Process

Specifically, the six-step process includes:

Step 1: Develop student learning outcomes or performance outcomes that align with the university's mission, the university's student learning goals, and (if applicable) the accreditation requirements of the respective discipline;

Step 2: Develop and implement methods of assessment involving direct and indirect measures;

Step 3: Determine criteria for success;

Step 4: Collect and analyze data;

Step 5: Plan (and execute) improvement actions; and

Step 6: Document assessment and improvement activities.

It should be noted that while Compliance Assist was customized to mirror the six-step assessment process, it only has separate information-entry fields for Steps 1-5. Step 6 is not explicit in the system for two reasons: 1) The use of Compliance Assist itself is an indication of the effort to document assessment activities; 2) The template is designed to capture longitudinal data (i.e. over multiple years) on the same outcome, which will inherently document the impact of improvement actions. Since this is the first year that assessment information is recorded in Compliance Assist, it is unrealistic to expect documentation of the impact of improvement actions. Therefore, the units primarily reported on Steps 1-5 in their annual assessment reports.

Assessment Status

A total of 106 units (including degree programs and non-instructional units) across the three divisions onboard for assessment in AY 14-15 submitted annual assessment reports through Compliance Assist. Ninety-six of these reports were from the 121 units who were required to submit the report. The additional 10 reports were submitted voluntarily by various graduate programs. The number of reports submitted by division and college is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Annual Assessment Report Submission by Division/College

	# of Units Required to Submit Report	# of Units Submitted Report[1]	% of Units Submitted Report
Overall Utilization by Participating Divisions/Units	121	96	79%
Academic Affairs (Colleges only)[2]	**78**	**69**	**88%**
College of Communications	4	4	100%
College of Education	11	11	100%
College of Engineering and Computer Sciences	5	4	80%
College of Health and Human Development	6	5	83%
College of Humanities and Social Sciences	24	19	79%
College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics	11	10	91%
College of the Arts	7	6	86%
Mihaylo College of Business and Economics	10	10	100%
Division of Information Technology	**21**	**10**	**48%**
Student Affairs	**22**	**17**	**77%**

1 At least one outcome was entered in Compliance Assist, and set to support university reporting.
2 Only undergraduate degree programs are counted for colleges, except for College of Education and Mihaylo College of Business and Economics, which include all degree programs.

The annual assessment reports were reviewed by four teams of 3-4 assessment liaisons between June 20-July 10, 2015. Each team reviewed 24-30 reports. A common feedback rubric (Appendix 2) that examines important issues for each of the six steps of the assessment process was used for the review. The rubric compared a unit's assessment report (i.e. all outcomes and associated information) against 18 questions such as "Are the outcomes measurable", "Did the measures appear to be valid and reliable", and "Are there any plans to use assessment results for improvements". Simple feedback (e.g. "yes", "no", "partial", "unclear") to these questions was generated, and constructive feedback was provided to elaborate on the simple feedback. Findings based on the feedback will be shared in the remainder of this section. Individual feedback will be distributed back to the units for their consideration as they improve their assessment practices next year.

Step 1: Outcomes

Across the 106 units, approximately 500 outcomes were reported. They include both student learning outcomes (SLOs) and performance outcomes (POs). Degree programs primarily are focused on SLOs, and units in Student Affairs and Information Technology have a combination of both types of outcomes. The number of outcomes that are reported by the units as aligned with the university learning goals (ULGs) and strategic plan goals is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Outcome Alignment with University Learning Goals and Strategic Plan Goals[1]

University Learning Goal Alignment		
University Learning Goal		**# Outcomes**
ULG 1	Intellectual Literacy	117
ULG 2	Critical Thinking	118
ULG 3	Communication	71
ULG 4	Teamwork	44
ULG 5	Community Perspective	37
ULG 6	Global Community	26
Strategic Plan Goal Alignment		
Strategic Plan Goal		**# Outcomes**
SPG 1	Curricular and Co-curricular Environment	162
SPG 2	Persistence, Graduation Rates & Narrowing Achievement Gap	31
SPG 3	High-Quality Faculty and Staff	11
SPG 4	Resource Development	0

1 Note that not all outcomes were labeled by the units as supporting a ULG or strategic plan goal.

A significant number of the units have sound outcomes. Out of the 106 programs, the assessment liaisons felt that 94 units (89%) have a reasonable and viable set of outcomes. Eighty-nine units (84%) have outcomes that are specific, clear, and concise, and 90 units (85%) have outcomes that appear measurable. The units who have relatively weak outcomes tend to confuse outcomes with tasks or strategies taken in order to complete the outcomes, or have outcomes that need to be unpacked to be specific and measurable.

The outcomes reported by the units vary greatly, reflecting the diverse disciplines and functions of the units and divisions. For example, the BA Geology program has an SLO "Apply mathematics, chemistry, biology and/or physics to help clarify the mechanisms behind major geological systems", which aligns with the University Learning Goal (ULG) that addresses critical thinking skills. The BA Japanese program includes "Identify historical and cultural trends as well as their role in shaping cultural expressions" as an SLO, which addresses the ULG on students' ability to work with diversity and differing perspectives. The BS Computer Engineering program identifies "Ability to identify, formulate, and solve engineering problems" as one of their SLOs, a classic outcome that focuses on knowledge acquisition and development of disciplinary competence. Non-instructional units also have SLOs, an example of which is the SLO of Diversity Initiatives and Resource Centers – "Students will be able to articulate knowledge and awareness around cultures and identities". Performance outcomes (PO) are also common for non-instructional units. For instance, Athletic Academic Services identifies the following PO: "Student-athletes will receive quality General Education Academic Advisement"; Associated Students, Inc. states that one of their outcomes is that "Student employees receive adequate support and feedback on their academic success".

Step 2: Methods and Measures

To make the assessment process manageable, units are encouraged to prioritize embedded assessment measures. Seventy-seven units (73%) indeed took advantage of information already collected in curriculum delivery or unit operation. The remaining units used external exams or surveys that are suitable to their units' unique context. Direct assessment is a popular choice among the units, examples of which include exam or assignment questions, capstone projects or papers, performances or presentations, and supervisor observations. This type of measure is seen in 83 units (78%). For example, the BS Biology program administered two content-based concept inventories in introductory and upper-division courses to capture how students develop their ability to "explain fundamental biological principles from the major areas of biology (cellular, molecular, physiological, organismal, ecological, and evolutionary)". The BA Communications program identified student performance in common portfolio assignments in upper-division courses as the indicator of the SLO "Demonstrate effective use of communication tools and technologies appropriate to the entry level of professional practice". Educational Partnership, a unit within Student Affairs, tracked graduate school enrollment through a national clearinghouse to assess whether McNair Scholars received quality support, evidenced by the Scholars successfully graduating and progressing onto graduate school.

In contrast, fewer units – 43 (or 41% of the units that submitted assessment reports) – used indirect measures such as surveys and reflection essays to gauge self-perception. For example, Housing and Residential Life used a post-semester survey to capture resident advisors' self-perception of their critical thinking skills. The BS Nursing program conducted self-assessment by students at three time-points (baseline, mid-program, and graduation) to document students' ability to provide evidence-based practice to patients. The BA Ethnic Studies-Option in Asian American Studies program collected students' self-reflection papers in a capstone seminar as one way of examining student "ability to think critically about the issues and concerns of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders".

It is encouraging to see that 37 units utilized both types of measures in their assessment efforts to gain a comprehensive picture of the findings. In the aforementioned BA Ethnic Studies-Option in Asian American Studies program example, in addition to student self-reflection, a capstone essay graded by the course instructor was used as direct assessment. Similarly, for the SLO "Students can effectively apply theories, concepts, and research findings to promote child well-being across diverse populations", Child and Adolescent Studies drew upon both a direct measure – short essays on a department-wide common assignment for Advanced Practicum, and an indirect measure – a self-assessment survey in CAS 490T, Senior Seminar. Student Life and Leadership also triangulated two sources of data when assessing the outcome "Students will receive quality online services from the Student Engagement Office" – students' usage of the Titan Pride Record to document co-curricular activities, and a student satisfaction survey with the services.

The assessment liaisons also reviewed the measures for their validity and reliability based on the descriptions provided in the reports, and found that 88 units (83%) appear to have valid measures.

Step 3: Criteria of Success

Determining criteria of success is an important step in assessment, as it asks the unit to determine the level of student performance or unit effectiveness needed to indicate the accomplishment of the outcomes prior to data collection and analysis. This step helps the units to set clear objectives without being distracted by the actual data. All units are advised to establish a criterion of success for each measure it uses. Out of the 106 units, 78 of them (74%) fulfilled this requirement. Several units did not determine a criteria of success for every measure, but most units – 82 (or 77% of the units that submitted assessment reports) – seem to have at least some appropriate criteria of success. This is a significant improvement from last year, where only a handful of programs included criteria of success as part of their assessment plan.

The criteria of success across units are fairly similar in nature. For measures using assignments or exam questions, the units typically determine a minimum percentage of students that need to perform at a certain level. For example, the BA Dance program examines students at the annual Dance Major assessments, and states that the criteria of success is "70% of students will receive a Meets Expectations or Exceeds Expectations based on evaluation of the demonstration of technical skills, application of performance concepts and understanding of movement vocabulary". For measures involving surveys, the units frequently state a minimum average rating or a percentage for certain responses. For instance, the BA Liberal Studies program administered an exit survey to all students, and considers the SLO on interdisciplinary connections achieved if "at least 80% of the students respond to the relevant exit exam question with options "high" or "very high". The EdD Educational Leadership program invites students to complete a survey on self-perceived knowledge and competence, and states that the SLO is met if "a minimum of 75% of candidates have an average rating of 3 or higher".

Step 4: Data Collection and Analysis

A significant amount of data were entered in Compliance Assist to demonstrate progress toward various outcomes. Over 50% of the units provided sufficient details on data collection and analysis that indicated thoughtful assessment efforts. A number of units – 56 (or 53% of the units that submitted assessment reports) – used sampling strategies to maximize the benefit of assessment without making the task unmanageable. Units often chose a representative sample of student work for assessment purposes, or focused on a carefully selected set of services as indicators of unit effectiveness.

The type of data collected varies greatly from unit to unit. The BFA Theatre Arts program evaluated seniors in productions and solo performances on five criteria (preparation, integration, characterization, communication, effectiveness), using a 3-point grading scale. The BS Kinesiology program extracted exam questions from KNES 383 to demonstrate students' ability to "describe the behavioral and psychological bases of movement and physical activity under a variety of environmental conditions". The BS Physics program assessed students'

communication skills by evaluating students' oral presentation in the capstone lab (PHYS 481) using a rubric with six categories and on a 0-3 scale. Students were assessed by three independent assessors, and an average score was calculated as the final performance indicator. The BA Chicana and Chicano Studies collected survey data from graduating seniors, which asked eight questions to understand how students perceived their learning experiences related to oral communication, as well as to their own oral communication skills. The MS Instructional Design and Technology program scored students' capstone projects in the practicum and the capstone course using a detailed rubric. The Civil and Environmental Engineering program collected scores of selected exam questions in several senior survey courses (EGCE 302, EGCE 325, EGCE 494), and surveyed graduating students to understand their "ability to identify, formulate, and solve engineering problems". Non-instructional units, due to their different functions, reported even more diverse data sources, ranging from student satisfaction ratings and self-reported learning gains to service access records and supervisor/customer evaluation of student performance.

Step 5: Improvement Actions ("Closing the Loop")

The ultimate purpose of assessment is to improve practice. As such, the assessment reports were reviewed for whether there are any plans or actual actions aimed at turning assessment results into improvements. Thirty-eight units (36%) indicated plans to make changes, and 15 (14%) described changes that are taking place. It is also worth mentioning that 19 units (18%) even provided follow-up assessment plans to capture the impact of the improvement actions. These numbers indicate that "closing the loop" has now become a part of many units' assessment agenda, but more work needs to be done to further highlight the importance of "closing the loop" across campus.

An excellent example for "closing the loop" comes from the Associated Students Inc. (ASI). In assessing students' communication skills, ASI asked student employees' supervisors to rate their communication skills, and used a validated questionnaire to

ask students' self-perception of their communication skill development. Students reported significant growth in oral communication skills, but not in written communication. Their positive self-reports were not corroborated by the supervisors' evaluation. These results prompted ASI to set forth plans to investigate possible areas of improvement in terms of students' oral communication development. At the same time, they reviewed the positions of the student employees, and discovered that written communication was not a focus for many positions. As a result, the outcome is being narrowed down to truly reflect the skills that are applicable to the student employees. Similarly, the BA Sociology program examined students' knowledge of research design and methods. They scored student in-class assignments in several upper-division courses, and surveyed senior majors for self-perceptions. Both direct and

indirect measures suggested student weaknesses in certain areas of research design/methods. These results were presented to the faculty at a department meeting, and the discussions led to several improvement actions: the adoption of a recommended statistics textbook by the research methods/stats faculty; an update of course description to 302 and 303 to ensure a minimum of skills are taught; and the submission of a new course proposal to serve as a capstone course that allows students to practice research methods skills.

It should be mentioned that the timing of this year's report submission did not allow much time for the units to review the assessment findings and determine improvement actions. The somewhat low completion rate of this step could partly be attributed to this timing issue. As a result, modifications to the annual assessment report timeline are currently being considered.

Utilization of the Entire Six-Step Assessment Process

The rubric used to review the annual assessment reports provided detailed feedback to various aspects of the assessment process. Among the review criteria, several are more indicative of whether the units have successfully completed the six-step assessment process. Specifically, feedback to questions 1.1, 2.2, 2.3, 3.1, 4.2, 5.1, and 5.2 in the rubric were used for this purpose. A unit is viewed as having successfully completed each step if its report received positive feedback to questions corresponding to each of the six-steps (i.e. question 1.1 for Step 1, questions 2.2/2.3 for Step 2, question 3.1 for Step 3, question 4.2 for Step 4, and question 5.1/5.2 for Step 5). The unit is considered as completing the entire six-step process appropriately if the report received positive feedback to all of these questions. As Figure 2 shows, the percentage of units that completed each step appropriately decreases as they navigate through the six-step assessment process. This is understandable, as many units have just begun to adopt the process. Thirty-four units (32.1%) completed the entire six-step assessment process successfully for at least one outcome. Twelve of these units are in Student Affairs, and the remaining are in various colleges. Given that this is the first year the university has implemented the six-step assessment process, this finding is particularly encouraging.
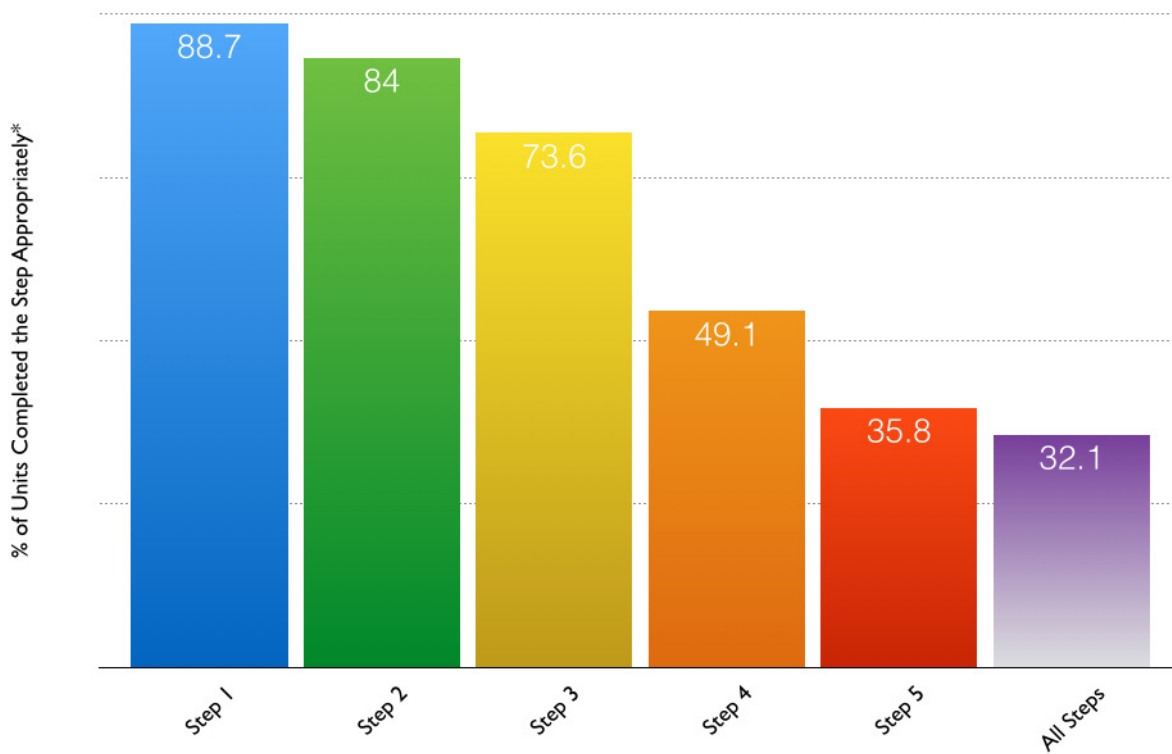
*Based on simple feedback for rubric items 1.1, 2.2, 2.3, 3.1, 4.2, 5.1 & 5.2.   **Step 6 is inherently reflected in longitudinal data documented in Steps 4-5.

Figure 2. Percent of Units that Completed the Six-Step Assessment Process Appropriately

Summary

Tremendous progress has been made at CSUF in AY 14-15 to advance the strategic plan goal of establishing a sustainable campus-wide assessment process. The widespread participation of units in the assessment process, coupled with the rich and diverse information collected through the annual assessment reports, serve as clear indicators of the vibrant assessment activities across the university.

The collective effort devoted to assessment has been recognized and commended by the WASC interim report review committee. In its response letter to the interim report, of which assessment is a significant component, the committee states:

"Through a faculty driven process, CSUF has defined and adopted University Learning Goals (ULGs) and General Education student learning outcomes. The Office of Assessment and Educational Effectiveness has been reinvigorated, and the institution has put in place a uniform six-step assessment process to support program improvement.

An online system (Compliance Assist) is used to manage and document assessment activities. Fourteen professional development workshops have also been offered to help faculty and staff understand assessment and make use of assessment results. CSUF has been strategic in transferring ownership of assessment to individual departments and units while providing centralized support, training and guidance. Assessment is also linked to Program Performance Reviews (PPRs) of departments. The panel praised CSUF for creating a well-crafted assessment process; developing, aligning and assessing student learning outcomes; conducting robust program reviews; and integrating quality assurance procedures into the fabric of the university. (CFRs 2.2a, 2.3, 2.4, 2.6, 2.7, 4.1, 4.3)".

External validation aside, internal evidence also suggests that the campus is gradually moving away from the perception that assessment is a purely administrative, compliance-driven process, and is beginning to view assessment as an integral part of our educational practices. At two separate campus-wide assessment events in September 2014 and March 2015, attendees from diverse units on campus were asked to complete the following sentence with a brief phrase: "Assessment is _____". The responses were summarized in word clouds (Figure 3), with green representing words that highlight the real purpose of assessment, and blue showing words that are often associated with resistance to assessment. Comparing the two word clouds, an encouraging cultural shift is evident.
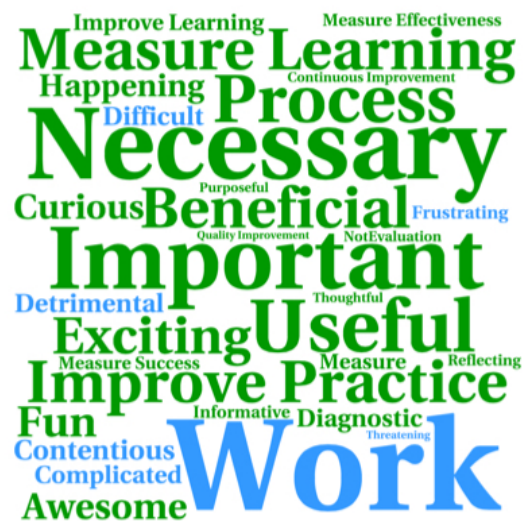
Figure 3. Word clouds summarizing campus responses to "Assessment is _____."

Riding on the wave of positive change, we look forward to more progress in 2015-2016.

Acknowledgements

We would like to once again express deep gratitude to the assessment liaisons for their hard work in reviewing the annual assessment reports, and providing feedback to the individual units. Their review served as the foundation of this report. We would also like to thank all the units and divisions that participated in the assessment effort, and completed the annual assessment reports. Our sincere gratitude also goes to the assessment committee members and coordinators at various units, departments, colleges and divisions.

The commitment and support of the Provost's Office, the Office of Academic Programs, and the leadership team from all the colleges and divisions are instrumental in bringing several assessment related initiatives to fruition. We are also grateful for the continued effort of the Assessment and Educational Effectiveness Committee to promote a culture of assessment on campus.

For questions or comments, please contact the Office of Assessment and Educational Effectiveness at assessment@fullerton.edu.

Appendix 1. 2014-2015 Assessment Liaisons

Greg Childers / Natural Sciences and Mathematics
Teresa Crawford / Education
Yessica De La Torre / Student Affairs
David Forges / Student Affairs
Katrin Harich / Business and Economics
Rommel Hidalgo / Division of IT
Arnold Holland / Arts
Pamella Oliver / Health and Human Development
Bruce Rubin / Extended Education & International Programs
Doug Swanson / Communications
Binod Tiwari / Engineering and Computer Science
Lisa Tran / Humanities and Social Sciences
Carl Wendt / Humanities and Social Sciences

Teeanna Rizkallah / Assessment & Educational Effectiveness Committee Chair

Appendix 2. Assessment Report Review and Feedback Rubric

Feedback 2014-2015 Assessment Report

Department/Program: _____

Unit Number: _____

Review Team: _____

Step 1: Assessable Outcome

	Review Criteria	Simple Feedback	Comments
1.1	Are the outcomes viable?		
1.2	Are the outcomes learner/customer centered?		
1.3	Are the outcomes specific, clear, and concise?		
1.4	Are the outcomes measurable?		

Step 2: Identify Methods & Measures

	Review Criteria	Simple Feedback	Comments
2.1	Are the outcomes assessed with *Embedded Measures*?		
2.2	Are the outcomes assessed with *Direct Measures*?		
2.3	Are the outcomes assessed with *Indirect Measures*?		
2.4	Do the measures appear to be valid and reliable?		
2.5	*(If provided)* Are the strategies to accomplish the outcome appropriate?		

Step 3: Criteria of Success

	Review Criteria	Simple Feedback	Comments
3.1	Does every method/measure have a predetermined criterion of success?		
3.2	Are the criteria of success appropriate?		

Step 4 (2014-2015): Data Collection and Analysis

	Review Criteria	Simple Feedback	Comments
4.1	Is there sufficient description of the data collection?		
4.2	Is there sufficient description of the data analysis procedures and results?		
4.3	Are the sample populations and sample sizes appropriate?		
4.4	*(If used)* Is the rubric calibrated?		

Step 5 (2014-2015): Improvement Actions

	Review Criteria	Simple Feedback	Comments
5.1	Are there any *plans* to use assessment results for improvements?		
5.2	Are there any *actual improvements* made based on the assessment results?		
5.3	Are there any plans to assess the impact of the improvement actions?		

6. General Comments

6.1	

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