Monitoring Report

The *Monitoring Report* addresses the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) Board of Trustees and Visiting Committee's recommendation applicable to the following referenced standard of the *SACSCOC 2012 Principles of Accreditation.*

Note: All documents referenced in this response are located under the SACSCOC header at https://www.nsula.edu/institutionaleffectiveness/. Under the SACSCOC header, select *Board of Trustees Request for Monitoring Report CS 3.3.1.1* to view the University's response and supporting documents. The supporting documents are in sequential order as they appear in the response. All educational degree program assessments are located under the header, *ASSESSMENT CYCLE REPORTS,* tab *2017-2018 EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS*.

Comprehensive Standard

3.3.1 *The institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results in each of the following areas (Institutional Effectiveness):*

3.3.1.1 Educational programs, to include student learning outcomes, Recommendation 2.

History of University Responses

This is Northwestern's second response to the Visiting Committee's Recommendation #2.

Summary of SACSCOC Visiting Committees 14-16 March 2017 findings. *The Committee recommends that the institution provide evidence that it assesses the extent to which it achieves the articulated student learning outcomes and provide evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results for each of its educational programs.* NOTE: A verbatim transcript of these findings and the University's response begins on page 8 herein.

The Visiting Committee found

> the institution's institutional effectiveness model; which includes an IE policy, strategic plan, strategic planning, and budgeting process, and assessment process is new. Interviews with the Director of Institutional Effectiveness, Executive Director of Institutional Effectiveness and Human Resources, and the Institutional Effectiveness Committee indicated that, while the institution had an assessment process in place prior to the implementation of the new Taskstream system, the process lacked uniformity and oversight in some areas.

In addition,

> the Committee determined that the new process, tools, and structure will assist the institution in systematically identifying outcomes, including student learning outcomes, assess the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provide evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results. However, the institution's process is immature and, therefore, the institution was unable to provide sufficient evidence that it assesses the articulated program outcomes and makes improvement based on those assessments.

SACSCOC Board of Trustees Finding 2-5 December 2017

On 3 December 2017, the SACSCOC Board of Trustees reaffirmed accreditation with a request for a *Monitoring Report* addressing the Visiting Committee's recommendation applicable to CS 3.3.1.1 (Institutional Effectiveness: educational programs), Recommendation #2 (#00: SACSCOC Board of Trustee letter dated 12 January 2018). This standard expects an institution to identify expected outcomes, assess the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provide evidence of improvement based on the analysis of the results in its educational programs, including student learning outcomes (SLO).

Specifically, the Board of Trustees found

> the institution provided evidence that it identifies student learning outcomes for each academic program and assesses the extent to which those outcomes are achieved; *however, the institution did not provide sufficient evidence of improvement based on the analysis of the results. The majority of academic programs reported that they have met thresholds, will continue to monitor, or described changes that will be made in the future.*

University Response to SACSCOC Board of Trustees

Northwestern, through exercising its Institutional Effectiveness Model for another iteration in Assessment Year (AY) 2017-2018, coupled with targeted training, can now provide meaningful evidence of improvement in student learning and program improvement based on the analysis of assessment results in each of its academic programs.

Northwestern maintains a cyclical and evolutionary process for the development and assessment of student learning outcomes for its educational programs in accordance with its Strategic Plan (#1: *Strategic Plan 2016-2021,* 23 Jan 2016) and this year's assessment of that plan, (#2a: *Assessment Cycle 2017-2018, Validating Our Approach, 26 Aug 2018 and #2b: AY 2017 - 2018 Assessment Cycle - Key Findings Brief, 3 Aug 2018)* as captured in its Institutional

Effectiveness (IE) Model *(#3: IE Model laid out over Time, 19 June 2018)*. These processes, with their attendant oversight structures, are continuously refined as part of the University's Strategic Plan for 2016-21. As noted by the Visiting Committee, the Institutional Assessment Model was immature at the time of their visit in March 2017. Academic year 2016-2017 was the first year Northwestern exercised a revised, uniform, institution-wide assessment process. The model provides for an evolutionary process in growth, refinement, and improvement over time. The Off-Site Committee, Visiting Committee and, most recently, the Board of Trustees document this pattern of improvement in their assessments of the model. This explains why some program assessments reflected, "they met thresholds, will continue to monitor, or described changes that will be made in the future." In these cases, the lack of required maturity and comparison data prevented presenting meaningful evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results of the plan of action from the year prior. Both, the Visiting Committee and the Board of Trustees, acknowledge the University's assessment process is sound but required time, repetition, and practice.

The University completed the second iteration of its institution-wide assessment process for all strategic focus areas, academic programs, administrative support services, and academic and student support services units in AY 2017-2018. This is significant in that this second iteration allows for analytical comparisons of the results between the previous year (benchmark in some cases) to the current year and the established target. These results provide the opportunity to secure meaningful evidence through analysis of the results to drive institutional improvement including student learning and program improvement.

The process provides the University the opportunity to analyze program results across all colleges and schools to better inform its strategic planning effort and make improvements. As a result, the University has seen transformative change and the establishment of a community of trust and inclusion. The actions taken from the analysis of assessment results serve as evidence Northwestern is engaged in the process of continuous improvement. The study of these results is the bedrock for the development of executable action plans focused on improvement in student learning, as well as institutional and program growth. Please see *(#2: Assessment Cycle 2017-2018, Validating Our Approach – pages 2-9)*.

To help focus this year's academic program assessments, the Director of Institutional Effectiveness developed an "example SLO assessment" with prompts to assist the program coordinators in their program assessments *(#4: Post SACSCOC 3.3.1.1 Example Approach - Homeland Security GSI Assessment, 21 March 2018)*. On January 23, 2018, the Executive Director for Institutional Effectiveness and Human Resources and the Director of Institutional Effectiveness conducted a teleconference with the University's SACSCOC Vice-President, Dr. Crystal Baird. They discussed this tool and the planned approach to address the Board of Trustees concern. The "example assessment," with its prompts, was determined to be a useful and appropriate approach. The Executive Director for Institutional Effectiveness and Human Resources and the Director of Institutional Effectiveness then briefed the University President

and his Leadership Team and the University Assessment Committee regarding the plan to address the *Monitoring Report* during the University's Mid-Year Review (#5: 2017 - 2018 Mid-Year Update Brief (10 Jan 2018).

The Director of Institutional Effectiveness met separately with each College and their academic program coordinators on multiple occasions leading them through training on the use of the "assessment example." This example and other training tools (#6: *Assessment-Evidence-Based Improvement,* 13 March 18, #7: *Anatomy of a Program - Unit Assessment,* 21 March 2018, #8: Guide to Outcome - Measure Development, 15 April 2017 and #4: *Post SACSCOC 3.3.1.1 Example Approach - COAS Homeland Security GSI Assessment,* 21 March 2018) helped program coordinators and supporting faculty better understand how to articulate their evidence of continuous improvement based on their analytical results. It was emphasized that while plans for future improvements are necessary, the current assessment is focused on improvements implemented during this assessment year based on the plans of action from AY 2016-2017. The assessment report format also was changed to include a comprehensive summary of key evidence of improvement based on the analysis of results. This addition captures changes implemented which lead directly to improved student learning or program improvement over the past year. The assessment document ends with the plan of action moving forward. The training and repetition of the assessment process allowed for better analysis of the assessment results, leading to improvements that are more precise in positively influencing student learning and program improvement. Every degree program now can now articulate the evidence of improvements made in student learning over the last assessment cycle. Most importantly, these improvements are reflective of assessment data and evidence.

2017-2018 Examples of Key Evidence of improvements based on analysis of results.
Evidence the University identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which those outcomes are achieved, and most importantly makes improvements based on analysis of the results is available under the category heading "ASSESSMENT CYCLE AY 2017-2018 REPORTS" in the sub-category "EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS" (ASSESSMENT CYCLE AY 2017-2018 REPORTS - EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS).   The following degree program assessment narratives provide excerpts from each of the four colleges. These extracts from assessment reports provide indisputable evidence regarding how continuous improvement is based on the analysis of the assessment results.

Bachelor of Music Education (BME). Based on the analysis of the results from 2016-2017, decisions made and implemented for SLO 3 were to modify research/written assignments from one large research paper to several smaller assignments that incorporated research and written work. Evidence of improvement over this assessment year is a 19% increase in students passing this component of work for the Fall 2017 semester. The opportunity for the faculty member to provide feedback on these smaller assignments improved. And, the opportunity for students to reflect and then implement, on the next assignment, strategies learned also allowed for improvement - particularly in the Fall semester. To continuously

improve, this approach of assigning several smaller research/written projects will continue for the next assessment cycle in 2018-2019. The level and quality of research and research skills will be a focus, so the research itself and writing skill expectations for this professional degree are maintained.

Bachelor of Science in Early Childhood Education. Per SLO 4, Measure 4.1., SLO 4 is assessed through a lesson plan and reflection in ECED 3110 *Early Childhood Methods*, which candidates take in the second semester of their third year. In AY 2016-2017, 87.5% of candidates met target and scored at least a "3." Candidates' mean score was 3.34 (n = 8). At the end of the course, program faculty examined the evidence to determine student learning in each area and determined that more emphasis was needed on Differentiation. Action was taken by increasing course content on Differentiation and adding two professional development sessions provided by outside presenters to enhance learner support. As a result, scores increased in this area, and 100% of candidates met the target in AY 2017-2018. In AY 2017-2018, candidates' mean score was 3.59 (*n* = 7). Candidates' lowest scores were in the Reflecting on Instruction category. This aligns with a department-wide need for an emphasis on reflection. Because the assessment and rubric are tied to NAEYC and state standards, candidates' artifacts demonstrated student learning via mastery of NAEYC and content standards. Although 87.5% of candidates met target in AY 2016-2017 and 100% met target in AY 2017-2018, program faculty have reviewed the evidence to evaluate student learning, and based on the analysis of the results, faculty will include additional professional development relating to *Reflecting on Instruction* to support student learning in AY 2018-2019 and maintain the cycle of continuous improvement. This effort to engage in program improvement will strengthen candidates' ability to reflect on their practice to improve student outcomes in the classroom.

M.Ed. Adult Learning and Development. Per SLO, Measure 1.1., as with the 2016-2017 administration, analysis of the 2017-2018 assessment results shows that most students scored below benchmark with an average deviation from benchmark of -2.7%. However, this is an improvement from the 2016-2017 average deviation from benchmark of -7.7%. The 2017-2018 cumulative mean increased by 5.8% compared to 2016-2017, showing overall improvement. Item analysis from the rubric for those students below benchmark indicated that writing errors, citation of sources, and APA formatting were the areas that resulted in a slightly greater percentage of lost points (average 27.8% loss) versus the content of the paper (average 25.4% loss). In response to the errors noted in 2016-2017, all course content for 2017-2018 was augmented with the addition of library research and additional APA guidance. Also, an increased emphasis on improving writing skills in the early weeks of the semester for indicated students was implemented in this course. As a result, in the 2017-2018 administration, the cumulative mean increased by 5.8% from the 2016-17 administration of the assessment, and the percentage of students who achieved benchmark or above increased from 0% to 33%. Scores from the 2017-18 administration were more consistent than the 2016-17 administration with a 5.9% standard deviation percentage of points in 2017-18 versus 13% in 2016-2017.

Based on the analysis of 2017-2018 results and to continuously improve, in 2018-2019 an emphasis on writing skills will be included in the course, and an increased emphasis on APA will be included in future course offerings.

Bachelor of Science in Biology. Per SLO 3, Measure 3.2., in AY 2016-2017, 30% (13/43) of biology majors reported they had an above average or excellent understanding of basic concepts in evolution. This performance was significantly below the goal of 70% of students reporting above average or excellent understanding on this assessment ($p < .001$) meaning that students were not confident in their knowledge of evolution. The decision was made to change the way in which the relevant information was delivered in the course. Instructors were asked to focus on creating links between class concepts and to provide students with relevance to how the information covered in class pertains to the biological world. In AY 2017-2018, 93% (26/28) of biology majors reported that they had an above average or excellent understanding of basic concepts in evolution. This performance was significantly greater ($p = .004$) than the goal of 70% on this assessment, meaning that students were confident in their knowledge of evolution. Furthermore, there was a very large increase (+63%) in positive student reporting since the previous academic year. The analysis demonstrates that the changes in information delivery, with special emphasis on linking class concepts to the biological world, did improve the perception of student learning/understanding. As above average or excellent understanding in all areas exceeded the goal of 70%, the target of this SLO will be raised in AY 2018-2019 to ≥ 95% of students reporting above average to excellent understanding in basic concepts in evolution.

Bachelor of Arts in English. Per SLO 5, Measure 5.1., in AY 2016-2017, 55 out of the 64 (86%) student projects sampled were judged competent or higher in their ability to demonstrate a basic knowledge of fundamental principles of genre and form in the context of a given course. Based on the analysis of these results, it was determined the faculty could further aid students in their engagement with genre and form; we increased instruction in explicit uses of the terminology or concepts of genre or form and creative imitations of a specific genre or form. This instruction took various forms, including writing assignments that specifically required students to engage with a specific genre, reading assignments from a variety of genres, and assignments that allowed students to produce texts in a genre of their choosing. In AY 2017-2018, the target was met again, as 36 out of 37 (97%) student projects were judged competent or higher in their ability to demonstrate a basic knowledge of fundamental principles of genre and form in the context of a given course. This is a significant increase from the previous year ($p = .037$). Increased instruction in genre and form are likely the reason for this increase. Further action will be taken to emphasize explicit uses of the terminology or concepts of genre or form and creative imitations of a specific genre or form. Courses will be further refined to increase instruction in explicit uses of the terminology or concepts of genre or form and creative imitations of a specific genre or form. Because of this improvement, the faculty will set a new target at 100% of student work receiving a score of competent or higher on the *Rubric for English Major Writing* for AY 2018-2019.

Bachelor of Science in Nursing. Per SLO 3, Measure 3.5., in AY 2016-2017, 99.4% of students achieved a score of 80% or above on the final practicum in NURB 3061. Lab skills are taught throughout the semester utilizing ATI videos, faculty demonstrations, student return demonstrations, and practicums. Students who are weak in skills or fail a practicum have remediation before retaking a practicum. Students must successfully pass the practicums as these skills are essential to providing safe, competent care in the clinical setting. There was a change in the 1st level coordinator from Spring 2016 to Fall 2016. Faculty reported issues of students not preparing for lab and not putting forth a good effort to learn all skills. In assessing the course during that first semester, the faculty determined that if the course was graded with A-F instead of pass/fail, students would give the class more effort. The plan for AY 2017-2018 was to change the NURB 3061 course to a graded course, institute a one-hour mandatory self-practice before each practicum before a student would be allowed to take the practicum and schedule a class period of practice/mock practicum before each practicum. These measures were implemented in AY 2017-2018. NURB 3061 was changed to a graded course and the practice periods were implemented. In addition, students who failed a practicum signed a learning contract specifying what was needed for the student to pass the practicum and the course. Faculty reported that students were more prepared for the practicums. Also, during AY 2017-2018, the coordinator noticed inconsistencies in faculty grading of practicums, prompting the plan for AY 2018-2019. During AY 2018-2019, students will learn skills during lab with their assigned lab faculty. However, students will sign up for evaluation with no regard for lab faculty. Students are evaluated by the next faculty member available during the testing period. It is felt that this will also facilitate student preparation for practicums. An additional plan to promote student success and utilize technology, includes incorporating virtual simulation as a component in the NURB 3061 lab course.

Master of Science in Radiologic Sciences. Per SLO 1, Measure A, this measure is derived from the evaluation of clinical students and measures the student's quality of work and performance in the clinical setting. In AY 2016-2017, this measure was unmet. Based on the analysis of the 2016 assessment cycle results, faculty began a campaign to reinforce to the students the importance of constant quality improvement in their overall clinical work and performance. This campaign included the following items: counseling students regarding clinic expectations; increase in the frequency of student/faculty evaluations, so to alert the student of his/her standing; and meeting with clinical faculty to ensure consistent evaluations of students. The downward trend from last year (2016) was reversed for the current assessment cycle. For the AY 2017-2018, this measure was met, with 100% of the students scoring a 3.5 or higher on a 5-point Likert scale addressing student work and performance, indicating that most students were demonstrating an appropriate quality of work and performance.

Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering Technology. Per SLO 4, Measure 4.2., in AY 2017-2018, 5/5 (100%) of students rated 4 or better for the ability to function effectively in teams by their peers on Capstone projects (EET 4940). In the previous year, AY 2016-2017, 6/6 (100%) of students rated 4 or better for the ability to function effectively on teams by their peers on

capstone projects (EET 4940). The target was met in both academic years. In AY 2017-2018, 1/1 (100%) of students rated 4 or better for ability to function effectively in teams by their peers on capstone projects (EET 4950), and in AY2016-2017, 7/7 (100%) of students rated 4 or better for ability to function effectively in teams by their peers on capstone projects (EET 4950). Based on classroom observations and assessment results from AY 2016-2017, which demonstrated some inequities in group member participation the instructor updated the course in AY 2017-2018 and assigned a team leader for the first time in every group in these courses. The team leader's responsibility (in addition to functioning as a group member) is to oversee each task assigned to each member of the group and that the group is progressing as per the project guideline. Further, the leader's responsibilities include calling meetings, reviewing progress, and preparing revised action plans until the final report and presentation is delivered to the client. These changes were made to enhance student learning and functioning in a group environment and to drive continuous improvement. These changes also likely played a role in the continuous attainment of assessment targets. In AY 2018-2019, the responsibilities of the students performing as team leaders will be defined in a written document and monitored to ensure that team leaders are not overloaded with responsibilities or work as compared to their peers.

Bachelor of Science in Computer Information Systems. Per SLO 1, Measure 1a.4., in AY 2017-2018, 206 students were given the BUAD 2200 written document measure to complete during BUAD 2200–Business Reports and Communications. It was found that 80% of the students (n = 206), scored 70% or better on the written objective (letter). The acceptable target was met. The ideal target was not met. In AY 2016-2017, the 70% acceptable target was met. However, to improve the classroom learning experience, it was recommended that other classes should request a one-page business letter be sent as an attachment to the professor at least twice during the semester. It also was suggested a short video be created explaining how to create the business letter and the e-mail for MGT 4300 and CIS 4600. The changes were implemented in AY 2017-2018. In AY 2017-2018, the result of the measure 1a.4 written document exercise indicated the acceptable target was not only met but was exceeded. This indicated students were able to demonstrate appropriate use of business reporting understanding, knowledge, and skill by providing an acceptable form of written communication, that is, the formal business letter. Although the 70% acceptable target was met, the faculty recommended that other classes be identified, and short business writing assignments are given in AY 2018-2019. A copy of the rubric will be made available to score the written document for faculty wishing to assist in the continuous improvement of the student-written communication skills within their classroom environment. MGT 4300 implemented a pilot study in Spring 2018 employing a project letter of introduction for business partners to further enhance the students' written document skills. Lunch and Learns covering various topics have become and will continue to be a valuable professional development program and discussion forum for our faculty in AY 2018-2019.

The institution stated that it is transitioning regarding an operational to strategic plan with an expected implementation date of December 2016. The institution provided assessment reports for the two prior academic years as evidence for this standard. The institution indicated that academic units are responsible for setting student learning outcomes and inputting into the Accreditation Management System. Additionally, a description was provided about what information is required for each assessment report. The institution provided a sampling of assessment reports from 2014-15 and 2015-16 but did not describe how the sample is reasonable and representative. Student learning outcomes were articulated; however, assessments rely heavily on the course or project grades, which include extraneous components (e.g., writing mechanics), which do not speak to the specified student learning outcome. It was unclear to the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee how these blunt measures provide useful and/or usable data upon which to make changes to improve the academic programs. The "Action is associated with the following Findings" portion of the assessment reports often indicated, "No supporting Findings have been linked to this Action." Evidence that results are used for continuous improvement was limited.

After a review of the Focused Report and supporting documentation, the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee finds the institution gives appropriate rationale for the sampling provided. In addition, the institution has named a Director of Institutional Effectiveness to demonstrate a commitment to university-wide involvement and oversight with a multifaceted, systematic approach to measuring performance and a cyclical process for continuous improvement. However, the institution's institutional effectiveness model; which includes an IE policy, strategic plan, strategic planning, and budgeting process, and assessment process is new. Interviews with the Director of Institutional Effectiveness, Executive Director of Institutional Effectiveness and Human Resources, and the Institutional Effectiveness Committee indicated that, while the institution had an assessment process in place prior to the implementation of the new Taskstream system, the process lacked uniformity and oversight in some areas. An examination of the evidence provided for the sample of the institution's academic programs for AY 2014-15 and 2015-16 demonstrated expected outcomes are identified; however, assessment of the articulated outcomes relies heavily on course and/or project grades that do not speak to directly to the student learning outcomes (SLO) identified.

The Committee determined that the new process, tools, and structure will assist the institution in systematically identifying outcomes, including student learning outcomes, assess the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provide evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results. However, the institution's process is immature and, therefore, the institution was unable to provide sufficient evidence that it

assesses the articulated program outcomes and makes improvement based on those assessments.

Committee Recommendation 2: The Committee recommends that the institution provide evidence that it assesses the extent to which it achieves the articulated student learning outcomes and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results for each of its educational programs.

University Response to SACSCOC On-Site Committees Visit 14-16 March 2017 (text is verbatim per the 17 August 2017 submission; however, the attachment although the same have had their numbering sequence changed to stay consistent with the response above).

Strategic Planning (for context)

In January 2017, Northwestern State University transitioned from its Strategic Plan 2011-2018, *Go for Greatness* (#9: *NSU Strategic-Plan-2011 – 2018*, Jan 2011), to its current five-year plan, *Strategic Plan 2016-2021* (#1: *Strategic Plan 2016-2021*, 23 Jan 2016). This transition was the culmination of six academic years of ongoing, integrated, and institution-wide research-based planning and evaluation processes that engaged the entire University community. In June 2017, the University completed the first year of this assessment cycle (#10: *Assessment Cycle 2016 – 2017, Setting the Benchmark, 5 July 2017*), which contributed to the refinement of objectives that drive the process of continuous improvement of institutional quality and demonstrate that the University is effectively accomplishing its mission.

Institution-Wide Assessment Process

The University's current Institutional Effectiveness (IE) Model evolved from the systematic review of institutional mission, goals, and outcomes dating to the University's "*Go for Greatness 2011-2018*" strategic plan. The University's Institutional Effectiveness Policy codifies this model, which includes a uniform institution-wide assessment process for academic program student learning outcomes (SLOs) and administrative unit service outcomes (SOs). The Northwestern IE Model Timeline graphically reflects the integrated nature of the University's IE process. Please note the activities reflected on the timeline will apply to each upcoming academic year. (#11: *Institutional Effectiveness Policy* signed 27 January 2017 and #3: *IE Model laid out over time 4 May 2017).*

The institution-wide assessment process completed under this plan in 2016-17 engaged one-hundred and sixteen (116) academic programs and administrative units (See ASSESSMENT CYCLE AY 2016-2017 REPORTS). The document, *Assessment Cycle 2016 –*

2017, Setting the Benchmark, leverages the assessment results of the University's sixty-six (66) academic programs, twenty-six (26) administrative support services units, and twenty-four (24) academic and student support services units. These assessment reports provide evidence that the University's academic programs and administrative units have capitalized on their respective findings and analysis to make decisions and take actions that led to improvement and mission accomplishment. Examples are provided at the end of this document. Assessment plans for 2017-2018 incorporate these refinements.

The University took a deliberate approach regarding the structure of its assessment process, particularly the identification of outcome measures. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness provided faculty and staff with a guide to assist in standardizing the development of academic program Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) and Service Outcomes (SOs) *(#8: Guide to Outcome - Measure Development 15 April 2017)*.

According to the University's *Guide to Outcome – Measure Development*, SLOs should be specific, measurable, attainable, results-oriented, and tied to a specific timeframe. Each outcome addresses knowledge, skills, attitudes, or dispositions. The policy (or model) also requires that outcome statements specify what students will know or be able to perform or demonstrate when they have completed or participated in the program, course, project, or activity.

As described in the University's *Guide to Outcome – Measure Development*, measures combine the assessment methodology and the target for the outcome. A direct measure, which is preferred, requires a student demonstrate the skill or knowledge. An indirect assessment measure addresses perception of knowledge, skills, attitudes, or dispositions. The University encourages setting targets that are difficult to attain so that there is a constant pursuit of improvement. As such, Northwestern does not rely solely on course grades as an acceptable measure for the assessment of an outcome.

In accordance with the *University Assessment Process Guide,* and in coordination with the University Provost and College Deans, each academic entity reviewed, amended, or revalidated their respective missions. The foundation of this assessment process emanates from the hierarchy of University, College, Department, Program and/or Unit mission. Sixty-six (66) degree awarding academic programs participated in the assessment process. Each developed program-specific Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) and an associated assessment methodology from which they derived their findings. Each then analyzed their results, leading to decisions and/or actions to promote continuous improvement *(#12: The University Assessment Process Guide, 6 April 2017)*.

The University's assessment calendar is derived from the academic calendar. By 15 April of each year, each academic program must submit a draft of their assessment cycle plan for

the upcoming year through their respective Academic Review Committee Chair. The Dean or Provost reviews and approves assessment plans before submitting them to the Office of the Director of Institutional Effectiveness (DIE). Revisions to assessment plans are completed prior to the beginning of the fall semester.

Assessment data collection took place throughout the 2016-2017 academic year with spring commencement on May 12, 2017, ending the assessment cycle. Each program identified its findings, completed its analysis, and collectively determined decisions/actions necessary to drive the improvement cycle. Program faculty compared current results to those of the previous year to better develop plans for the upcoming year. Program coordinators then submitted completed assessments, once approved by the respective Dean, to the Director of Institutional Effectiveness (DIE) on 15 June 2017.

An Academic Review Committee, composed of program assessment coordinators, oversees the assessment process within each of the University's four Colleges. Following the completion of all program assessments, each of the four Academic Review Committee Chairs develops an annual assessment report. The report captures the most significant findings and decisions of the past academic year, including proposed and actual changes, an analytical assessment of the potential effects of the changes, and the status of new assessment plans. The DIE consolidates these reports into one executive presentation for the University President's review in the June-July timeframe. (#13: *AY 2016-2017 Assessment Findings Report, 5 July 2017).*

Key Findings and Decisions, Educational Programs *(Examples were omitted for brevity)*

Evidence that the University identifies expected outcomes, assesses outcomes and makes improvements based on analysis of the results is available on the Institutional Effectiveness website. All sixty-six (66) academic program assessments for AY 2016-2017 are posted under the category heading "ASSESSMENT CYCLE AY 2016-2017 REPORTS" in the sub-category "EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS" (ASSESSMENT CYCLE AY 2016-2017 REPORTS - EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS).   Below are examples of some of the key findings and decisions from each of the four colleges.