

Capital University
2020-2021 Annual Academic Assessment Report
Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching

Assessment at Capital University supports the mission of the University, “*Transforming lives for a brighter world,*” and builds on an institutional history of self-reflection to enhance the quality of education and the student experience. The assessment process is multifaceted and engages all academic and co-curricular programs. The institution has a well-developed infrastructure for assessment and leadership is provided at multiple levels by the Provost, the Institutional Effectiveness Committee, the Associate Provost for Accreditation and Analytics, the Director of Assessment and Student Analytics, the deans, department chairs, and student development directors.

The academic year 2020-2021 was full of both challenges and achievements. Due to the risk of COVID, academic and co-curricular programs delivered their courses and educational experiences through a mixture of on-line and hybrid formats. Faculty worked throughout the summer of 2020 to develop all coursework in an online format, aided by faculty development workshops and one-on-one consultations. All Fall semester courses used an online format for the first month and then the majority transitioned to a hybrid model, with half of the students in the class attending in person two days per week and the other half attending in person on two remaining days. Students participated in an online format for the remainder of the class sessions. To assess student perception of these transitions and the quality of online learning, additional questions were added to the *IDEA Course Evaluation Survey*, used by the University to gather student evaluations of teaching. Responses to these focused questions, as well as comparisons of course and instructor ratings to previous years, indicate that faculty were successful in the transitions (see IDEA course evaluation summary below for more details). Faculty perceptions were tapped as well through a Faculty Online Survey administered in Fall.

In addition to making the swift and successful transition to online and hybrid learning formats, faculty and student development staff actively engaged in assessment activities throughout those formats. In the Fall semester, programs outlined their planned assessment work for 2020-2021 through completing templates in *Anthology Planning*. Programs reported their mission statement and indicated how it aligned with and supported the university mission. They summarized program assessment activities from 2019-2020 and highlighted successful changes to the curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment. Programs indicated key assessment questions that they wanted to pursue and what outcomes they planned to assess in 2020-2021. Twenty-nine academic and co-curricular units submitted plans, which were reviewed by members of the Institutional Effectiveness Committee.

Learning outcomes were developed and refined by a number of programs in 2020-2021. Although the School of Management & Leadership and the Conservatory of Music had overarching learning outcomes for their undergraduate programs, both developed discrete outcomes for each of their undergraduate major programs. Also, staff from the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, Library Services, and the Schumacher Art Gallery developed learning outcomes and assessment plans in 2020-2021.

Throughout the academic year, faculty and staff entered assessment plans and results into *Anthology Outcomes*. The *Outcomes* platform, implemented in 2019-2020, allows for the entry of individual student data points or the total number of students in each of five achievement categories: *Exceeded Expectations*, *Met Expectations*, *Partially Met Expectations*, *Improvement Needed*, and *Missing or Incomplete*. Having

standardized achievement categories allows faculty and staff, who are closest to the learning, to develop meaningful assessment measures using authentic student work, and facilitates the aggregation of results across programs and semesters. In addition to reporting specific assessment results, staff and faculty outlined the assessment process, summarized the results, and indicated what changes to curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment were planned as a result of the current assessment. In Summer 2021, the assessment results and discussion information were imported into the *Planning* templates. Thirty-six assessment reports were generated, reviewed, and comments shared with program faculty and staff.

The assessment reports highlighted changes in curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment. The Media program noted that some students showed difficulty in structuring speeches and in the use of presentation aids. The program plans to focus on these student presentation areas across the curriculum and require participation in a speech workshop that is currently optional. The Department of Religion and Philosophy also indicated a plan to make adjustments across courses to include more guidance and direction for oral presentations. Other changes to the curriculum and pedagogy include: the Student and Community Engagement program will incorporate Implicit Bias training for student interns and require attendance at programs on diversity, equity, and inclusion; Career Development staff will share the rubric used to assess student resumes with students early in their resume revision process; and the Master of Business Administration program may include additional scaffolding of assignments and integrate more rigorous analytic opportunities earlier in the curriculum to improve achievement in Analytical and Conceptual Skills.

Multiple programs instituted and refined rubrics. For example, the Biology program planned to create a rubric to measure Oral Communication in Fall 2020 and noted in their 2020-2021 results summary, “The confidence in the accuracy of the results in Fall 2020 was selected as ‘high’ with the use of this new rubric to assess the students individually on their oral presentations.” History also “made a conscious decision to devise one rubric with eight criteria for all of our assignments.” As programs adopted more well-defined rubrics, many, for example, the Biology, Chemistry, and English programs, noted the desire to use these to track the performance of their students as students move across the curriculum. Chemistry plans to “ask students to reflect on their rubrics from previous semesters ... and how that feedback was incorporated into their next seminar.” The English department “will also begin working on a more nuanced assessment of each student's progress over his or her college career and will, therefore, switch from “blind” or anonymous assessment of papers in ENG 480, ENG 111, or any other course that assesses written communication, to an assessment model that monitors each student's performance over his or her stay in the program.” These changes in assessment, along with the enhanced analytic capability that the *Anthology* suite provides, foreshadow more complex and integrated assessment models that will lead to improvements in student learning.

Signature Learning

Capital University has seven Signature Learning Outcomes that serve as the foundation of undergraduate learning: Liberal Education Skills, Explain Choices, Ethical Interaction, Communication, Cultural Engagement, Data Use, and Natural and Social Sciences (see Table 1). These outcomes are delivered throughout the curriculum and co-curricular experiences, not solely in “general education” courses. The delivery and assessment of these outcomes are under the leadership of the Signature Learning Committee. Each year, programs are encouraged to assess program outcomes that are associated with specific Signature Learning Outcomes, if applicable, in upper-level or capstone courses.

Table 1. Signature Learning Outcome Statements

Signature Learning Outcomes	
Liberal Arts Skills	Students apply the skills of a liberally educated person to investigate problems and questions.
Explain Choices	Students explain how their choices affect goal achievement across a variety of domains (e.g., professional and personal relationships, finances, mental and physical health, etc.).
Ethical Interaction	Students interact knowledgeably and ethically with people and ideas from many cultures, religions, and identities.
Communication	Students speak, write, and listen effectively.
Culture Engagement	Students analyze, contextualize, and engage with human cultures.
Data Use	Students access, evaluate, interpret, and produce quantitative and qualitative information to solve problems.
Social and Natural Sciences	Students articulate basic principles, methods, and societal effects of natural and social sciences.

In an effort to identify where the Signature Learning Outcomes may be available for assessment at the upper- or capstone-level, a matrix of relationships between the Signature Learning Outcomes and program learning outcomes was generated. Effective Communication is related to the greatest number of program outcomes with 38 academic and 4 student development programs delineating a communication outcome. Thirty-five academic outcomes are associated with Liberal Education Skills. Cultural Engagement is related to 31 academic outcomes and 8 student development outcomes. The Natural and Social Sciences outcome has 29 related academic program outcomes. Twenty-eight academic and six co-curricular program outcomes are related to Ethical Interactions. Explain Choices is associated with 14 academic and 10 student development outcomes. The outcome with the narrowest coverage is Data Use, which is related to 17 academic outcomes. It is likely that Data Use is being addressed by more programs, but not being captured by currently expressed learning outcomes. Future exploration of this is warranted.

In 2020-2021, the University focused on the assessment of Effective Communication (for a second year) and Ethical Interaction. In addition, programs reported the results of other assessed Signature Learning Outcomes (see Graph 1 and Table 2 below). Results were aggregated across Fall 2020, Spring 2021, and Summer 2021, and across undergraduate, graduate, and student development programs where mastery-level learning was indicated. Effective Communication was related to 26 program learning outcomes with a total of 747 student assessments. Seventy-six percent of students met or exceeded expectations, with another 13 percent of assessed students who partially met expectations or passed in a pass/fail grading scheme, leading to a total of 90 percent of assessed students achieved a passing level or higher in communication skills. This compares to the results from 2019-2020, wherein students met or exceeded expectations in 80 percent of 26 assessments with 465 students. Another 11 percent of students partially met expectations or passed in a pass-fail grading situation, indicating also that 90 percent of assessed students have achieved passing level communication skills. Although these results span only two years, it is an indication that Capital students are achieving the desired communication skills given the number of students assessed and the number and breadth of disciplines in which the assessments took place.

Graph 1. 2020-2021 Assessment of Signature Learning Outcomes

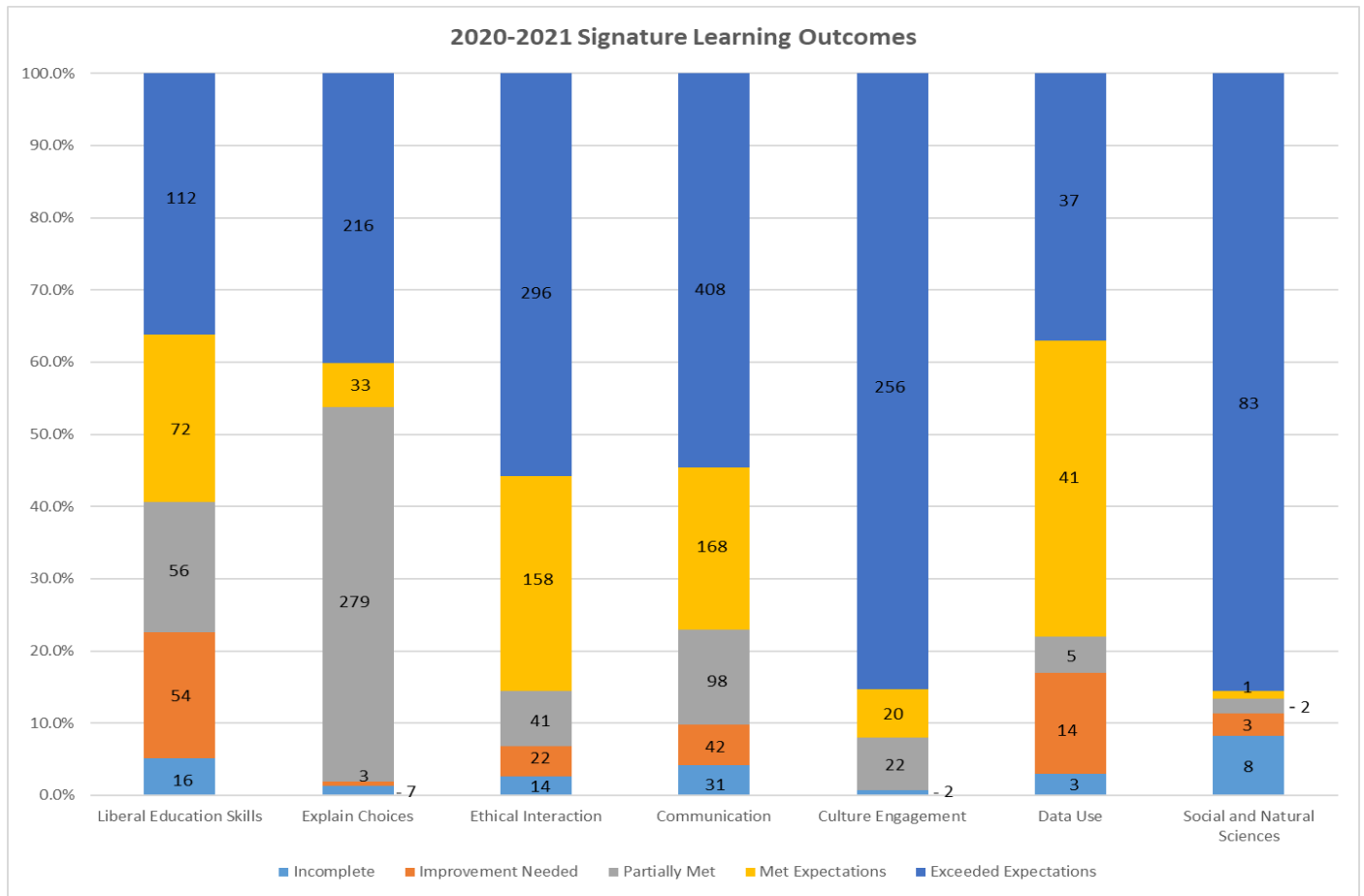


Table 2. 2020-2021 Assessment of Signature Learning Outcomes

2020-2021 Signature Learning Outcomes

	Exceeded Expectations		Met Expectations		Partially Met Expectations		Improvement Needed		Incomplete or Missing		Total Assessments	Total Learning Experiences
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N		
Liberal Education Skills	36.1%	112	23.2%	72	18.1%	56	17.4%	54	5.2%	16	310	13
Explain Choices	40.2%	216	6.1%	33	51.9%	279	0.6%	3	1.3%	7	538	10
Ethical Interaction	55.7%	296	29.8%	158	7.7%	41	4.1%	22	2.6%	14	531	25
Communication	54.6%	408	22.5%	168	13.1%	98	5.6%	42	4.2%	31	747	26
Culture Engagement	85.3%	256	6.7%	20	7.3%	22	0.0%	0	0.7%	2	300	10
Data Use	37.0%	37	41.0%	41	5.0%	5	14.0%	14	3.0%	3	100	6
Social and Natural Sciences	85.6%	83	1.0%	1	2.1%	2	3.1%	3	8.3%	8	97	5

Ethical Interaction was assessed in 25 learning experiences with 531 students in 2020-2021. Eighty-six percent of students assessed met or exceeded expectations, with another eight percent partially meeting expectations, leading to a total of 94 percent of students showing passing level achievement or higher. In 2019-2020, performance on this outcome was measured in 10 courses/co-curricular experiences with 327 students. Although assessed in a narrower band of learning experiences, students were very successful with 98 percent of students meeting or exceeding expectations. Ethical Interaction was a targeted outcome for 2020-2021 and therefore this led to a significant increase in reported results. It appears that targeting outcomes is a successful strategy to highlight specific learning skills that are already happening within programs, but are not being delineated, measured, and reported.

Programs assessed other outcomes that support the other Signature Learning Outcomes. Fifty-nine percent of students met or exceeded expectations and 77 percent showed passing achievement or higher in outcomes related to Liberal Education Skills. The Explain Choices outcome was evaluated primarily in co-curricular experiences. Many of these assessments were graded on a pass/fail basis. A singularity of the *Anthology* system is that “pass” grades are displayed as “*Partially Met Expectations*” which may not show the most accurate representation of student achievement. Given this, 98 percent of students showed passing achievement and above on this outcome. Also, students were very successful on outcomes that assessed Culture Engagement with 92 percent meeting or exceeding expectations and 99 percent partially meeting expectations or higher. The other two outcomes, Data Use and Social and Natural Sciences, were assessed with fewer students (100 and below) and in a more limited range of learning experiences (5-6), and therefore the data may not clearly reflect the actual learning that is happening on campus.

The approach of targeting specific Signature Learning outcomes and assessing them in upper-level and capstone courses has been effective in capturing this learning and increasing engagement. The number of courses/experiences and number of individual assessments increased from 2019-2020 to 2020-2021, especially when an outcome was targeted. Focusing on a specific outcome for two sequential years also provides more reliability to the results and allows programs to make changes and then assess the impact of those changes. Strategically rotating the focused outcomes over time will allow for coverage of all Signature Learning Outcomes. Future assessment goals also will include developing the infrastructure to capture achievement of the learning outcomes at the introductory and reinforcing levels of learning. This will allow for further examination of the scaffolding of learning experiences throughout the curriculum and co-curriculum.

Program Mission Statements

Programs provided program mission statements as part of submitting their annual assessment plan. Faculty and staff were encouraged to revise the statements if needed and to compare them against those cited in the University Bulletin to maintain consistency. Mission statements and learning outcomes were gathered and collated into one document for ease of reference (https://www.capital.edu/uploadedfiles/content/academics/academic_offices/center_for_excellence_in_learning_and_teaching/outcomes_assessment/mission-statements-and-outcomes.pdf).

Revision of Assessment Website

In Spring 2021, the Assessment website, <https://www.capital.edu/outcomes-assessment/>, was revised significantly to bring it in line with National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA) best practices reflecting transparency and accountability. The new website design incorporates six major areas: Student Learning Outcomes, Assessment Plans, Assessment Resources, Current Assessment Activities, Evidence of Student Learning, and Use of Student Learning Evidence. Content, evidence, and associated

links were provided to the Capital website team (Media Relations) who designed and implemented the website revision.

Showcase of Student Learning

Instituted in 2011, the Showcase of Student Learning was created to highlight assessment initiatives, provide a learning opportunity for faculty and staff, and generate discussion. After an emphasis on community engagement for several years, the Showcase returned to its original focus on the assessment of student learning with a spotlight on the assessment of Signature Learning Outcomes. As programs were expected to assess Communication and Ethical Interaction outcomes in 2020-2021, this focus provided a platform for participation for all programs. Eleven programs submitted posters and presented them on May 11, 2021. Poster topics covered the assessment of Communication and Ethical Interaction in several academic disciplines and in co-curricular experiences, the use of rubrics, the University Competency Assessment Portfolio, the Ethics and Society Pathway, the Meaning and Culture Pathway, and assessment in Health and Sport Sciences. Lively discussions occurred with the exchange of assessment efforts.

Professional Development Activities

Faculty and staff development around assessment was a key initiative in 2020-2021. In addition to other professional development opportunities, online programs included *Putting the Student Back into Student Learning* (9/22/2020), *Assessment Basics* (10/6/2020), *Rubrics* (11/3/2020), and several sessions focused on using the *Planning* and *Outcomes* platforms to enter assessments plans and results. Step-by-step guides were developed for *Creating and Using Rubrics in Campus Labs*, *2020-2021 Assessment via Campus Labs*, and *Using Campus Labs (Anthology) Outcomes Platform*. Also, an online video on *Assessment of Student Learning* was recorded for the New Faculty Orientation iLearn Course. The Director of Assessment met with faculty and staff in individual and departmental consultations (N = 86) throughout the year, as well as providing an assessment perspective for the Community Engagement, Social Justice, Ethics and Society Communities of Practice, the Signature Learning Committee, and the Diversity & Inclusion Strategic Planning Committee.

Program Review

The program review process provides academic and student development units the opportunity on a cyclical basis to evaluate their programs from a broader perspective, including mission, learning outcomes, curriculum mapping, assessment plans, curriculum review, and student success. In Fall 2021, seven templates were developed in *Planning* to guide the program review process and capture the program review work based on previous program review materials. In Spring 2021, eight programs met online for five sessions under the leadership of the Associate Provost for Accreditation and Analytics and the Director of Assessment and Student Analytics. The programs included Computer Science, Counselor Education, Education (Undergraduate), Library Services, Mathematics, Nursing (Graduate), Nursing (Undergraduate), and Social Work.

Student Course Evaluations

Capital University utilizes the *Anthology IDEA Course Evaluation Survey* to measure student perceptions of instructor behaviors, progress on learning objectives, amount of coursework, difficulty of subject matter, amount of effort expended, student interest and preparedness, and global evaluations of the course and the instructor. In 2020-2021, additional questions were added to the survey that measured perceptions of the online technology, online teaching methods, and access to the instructor and other students.

Undergraduate course surveys also included two questions tapping student perception of progress on the Signature Learning Outcomes of Communication and Ethical Interaction.

Responses serve as indirect measures of learning outcomes, as well as general indicators of teaching proficiency. Institutional analyses of the responses from Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 courses included item analyses that compared responses to previous academic years and across departments. In Fall 2020, the survey was administered in 618 undergraduate and 34 graduate courses. Student response rates were 33 percent and 42 percent, respectively. These response rates were lower than in previous semesters, perhaps due to being administered in an online/hybrid teaching environment. Evaluations of the progress made on learning objectives, the instructor, the course, and summary scores are relatively positive with overall mean ratings ranging between 3.9-4.2 on a 5-point scale for undergraduate evaluations, and 4.0-4.5 for graduate evaluations. Ratings on these overall outcomes and on individual items are similar to those in the last several semesters and suggest that, in general, faculty were able to transition effectively to a hybrid and online format. Responses on the specific online teaching items further supported that students, on average, evaluated the use of technology and online teaching as effective.

In Spring 2021, the survey was administered in 544 undergraduate and 46 graduate courses. The response rates of 34 percent and 50 percent, respectively, were slightly higher than Fall 2020, but still lower than in the past. At both the undergraduate and graduate levels, overall evaluations were positive and slightly higher than those recorded in Fall 2020. Students rated the instructors, progress on learning objectives, and the courses positively with overall means at both undergraduate and graduate levels ranging between 4.0 and 4.5 on a 5-point scale. Students continued to perceive instruction delivered in online and hybrid formats to be as effective as in the past face-to-face delivery format.

The Law School utilizes a custom course evaluation survey administered through the *Anthology Course Evaluations* platform. In Fall 2020, 71 sections of Law School courses were assessed with a response rate of 43 percent. In general, students evaluated instructor performance positively with all but one overall item mean over 4.0 on a 5-point scale. The item that evaluated whether instructors employed varied activities and methods had an overall mean of 3.9. The overall mean ratings of the effectiveness of online instruction and the use of technology were relatively lower, although all but two means were over 4.0. The two lowest means were on the items that assessed student perceptions of the effectiveness of TWEN Discussion Boards and that the time interacting with other students was sufficient. In Spring 2021, a response rate of 47 percent was seen with the survey administered in 70 course sections. Overall mean ratings on the instructor questions ranged from 4.22 to 4.79. Similar to the ratings in Fall 2020, the ratings of the online items were lower but over 4.0, ranging from 4.15-4.49, except for the mean rating for the TWEN Discussion Boards ($M = 3.89$).

Higher Learning Commission Reaccreditation Preparation

Several steps were taken in 2020-2021 to prepare for the University's Comprehensive Evaluation for Reaccreditation scheduled for October 2022. A timeline was developed for preparing the Assurance Argument and the other materials needed for the Comprehensive Evaluation. Five committees, each addressing a separate Assurance Argument criterion, were proposed and constituted. Committees started identifying and gathering evidence in Summer 2021. They will continue to do so as well as craft the associated narrative in 2021-2022. A process utilizing the *Anthology Compliance Assist* platform was identified to capture faculty credentials and associated taught courses.

Summary

Capital University is actively engaged in assessing student learning and evaluating its programs, both academic and co-curricular through a range of initiatives. In 2020-2021, it made great strides in further implementing the gathering and integration of assessment results through its use of the *Anthology* suite of platforms. Evidence gathered at the course and program-level indicate that not only are students achieving the desired outcomes but also faculty and staff are using the assessment process to improve the quality of education and student learning.

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