

Capital University

2021-2022 Annual Academic Assessment Report

Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching

Capital University is invested in assessment and evaluation to further its mission to *transform lives by empowering an inclusive community of learners through engaging academic, co-curricular, and professional experiences*. The university has a long history of self-reflection to improve student learning and success. A well-developed infrastructure supports assessment and evaluation and includes leadership at multiple levels, including 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.

In the academic year 2021-2022, Capital returned to primarily on-ground delivery methods for coursework and programming, while still capitalizing on the gains made in online and hybrid formats. Faculty and students pivoted back into the classroom, as well as learned to cope with complications arising from ongoing COVID infections and exposures. IDEA student course evaluations indicate that this was perceived as successful with overall means for excellence of the instructor and course being similar in Fall 2021 to previous semesters, although ratings dropped slightly in Spring 2022.

Assessment and evaluation work continued to make gains in 2021-2022. The institution further refined its annual assessment process using the *Anthology* platform. Faculty and staff summarized work from 2020-2021 and outlined assessment plans for the current academic year in Fall Semester, assessing achievement on both program learning outcomes and Signature Learning Outcomes. Assessment plans from 30 programs/units were entered into *Planning* and reviewed by the Director of Assessment. This information was used to structure the *Outcomes* platform such that program outcomes were linked to relevant courses and Signature Learning Outcomes were linked appropriately to program outcomes. Throughout the year, faculty and staff entered assessment results, analyzed the results, and indicated what changes were proposed due to the results. At the end of Spring 2022, results were integrated into *Planning* to produce assessment reports. Thirty programs participated in the results process. In the last four years participation has grown from 18 programs in 2018-2019, 26 in 2019-2020, 35 in 2020-2021, to 30 in 2021-2022, with noted increases in student development programs.

Signature Learning Outcomes

AY 2021-2022 was the third year of aggregating assessment results from capstone or upper-level coursework or learning experiences for achievement on the Signature Learning Outcomes. Both the number of recorded assessments and the number of learning experiences at the course or program level significantly increased from 1719 assessments recorded in 60 courses/learning experiences in 2019-2020 to 2944 in 110 experiences in 2021-2022 (see Table 1). This increase

in the number of assessments recorded across a breadth of learning experiences allows the institution to have more confidence in the results.

	2019-2020		2020-2021		2021-2022	
	Total	Courses/ Experiences	Total	Courses/ Experiences	Total	Courses/ Experiences
Signature Learning Outcomes	N	N	N	N	N	N
Liberal Education Skills	236	6	310	13	232	12
Explain Choices	96	2	538	10	205	6
Ethical Interaction	327	9	531	25	672	27
Communication	441	25	747	26	407	19
Culture Engagement	316	8	300	10	508	12
Data Use	41	2	100	6	555	19
Social and Natural Sciences	262	8	97	5	347	14
Total	1719	60	2623	95	2944	110

Table 1. Number of assessments and courses/learning experiences for Signature Learning Outcomes.

The university, through the Institutional Effectiveness Committee and the Signature Learning Committee, implemented a process that targets specific Signature Learning Outcomes for focused assessment in upper-level or capstone experiences each year. For the two previous academic years, programs were asked to assess *Communication* and *Ethical Interaction*. In 2019-2020, *Communication* was assessed in 441 students in 25 learning experiences, and in 747 students in 26 experiences in 2020-2021. *Ethical Interaction* was assessed in 327 students in 9 experiences and 531 students in 25 experiences. In comparison, the outcome, *Data Use*, was assessed in two courses with 41 assessments in 2019-2020 and six courses with 100 students in 2020-2021. For 2021-2022, programs were asked to assess *Data Use* to get a better idea of where these skills were being addressed and how students were performing. *Ethical Interaction* was targeted for an additional year to establish a reliable level of student achievement. This strategy of targeting specific outcomes was productive with programs reporting achievement on *Data Use* in 19 learning experiences with 555 students in 2021-2022, and even higher levels of assessments seen for achievement on *Ethical Interaction*. The outcome, *Explain Choices*, with the fewest number of students and experiences may benefit from future focused assessment.

As Capital builds on its aggregated data of assessment results, there is a clearer picture of student achievement on the Signature Learning Outcomes. Table 2 shows the percentage of assessed students who achieved a passing level or above (*Partially Met*, *Met* and *Exceeded Expectations*). In 2021-2022, between 81% - 98% of students assessed achieved passing levels on these outcomes.

Signature Learning Outcomes	Met + Exceeded Expectations			Partially, Met, Exceeded Expectations		
	19-20	20-21	21-22	19-20	20-21	21-22
Liberal Education Skills	50.8%	59.4%	66.0%	62.7%	77.4%	82.0%
Explain Choices	100.0%	46.3%	76.1%	100.0%	98.1%	81.0%
Ethical Interaction	97.9%	85.5%	95.7%	99.1%	93.2%	97.2%
Communication	80.0%	76.4%	89.0%	90.5%	89.9%	97.1%
Culture Engagement	97.8%	92.0%	94.9%	99.1%	99.3%	98.4%
Data Use	92.7%	78.0%	79.1%	95.1%	83.0%	88.3%
Social and Natural Sciences	63.4%	86.6%	75.2%	81.3%	88.7%	93.7%

Table 2. Percentage of students meeting achievement levels on Signature Learning Outcomes

The Signature Learning Committee and associated Communities of Practice continued the work of clarifying the Signature Learning Outcomes. In an effort to simplify and promote student understanding, the committees replaced the previous Students Learning Outcomes (SLOs) listed in the *Bulletin* with short descriptions. For example, for the Liberal Education Skills Outcome of “*Students apply the skills of a liberally educated person to investigate problems and questions*” the five SLOs (see Table 3) have been replaced with “The liberal arts include a set of subjects, practices, and investigations that orient each student’s life-long growth and sense of vocation. Through inquiry and reflection across the student experience, students integrate and apply critical thinking, effective communication, cultural awareness, and ethical sensitivity to progressively challenging situations and contexts.” (2022-2023 *Undergraduate Bulletin*) (see Appendix A for all descriptions). This should improve student understanding of the outcomes and what is expected.

Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)	Students Learning Outcomes (SLOs) That Lead to the PLOs
<p>Students apply the skills of a liberally educated person to investigate problems and questions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> SLO 1: Students identify and reflect on physical, intellectual, emotional and social components of the life transitions. <input type="checkbox"/> SLO 2: Students articulate and apply the skills of a liberal education. <input type="checkbox"/> SLO 3: Students apply strategies to critically evaluate, process, and synthesize information. <input type="checkbox"/> SLO 4: Students produce an artifact or work that analyzes a significant issue, in participation with social and academic information communities, from multiple perspectives. <input type="checkbox"/> SLO 5: Students engage in reflective discovery of information (identifying gaps, conflicts, or areas of exploration), formulate questions, and employ resources for scholarship.

Table 3. Signature Learning Program and Students Learning Outcomes (2021-2022 *Undergraduate Bulletin*)

In addition to developing these descriptions, Communities of Practice (CoPs) continued to work on integrating assignments across sections and sequenced courses, particularly in *Ethics and*

Society and Criticism and Culture. Several CoPs refined assessment plans (for example, *Community Engagement*) and developed rubrics to standardize assessment across sections.

American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) Institute on ePortfolios.

In Summer 2021, a small group of staff and faculty met to discuss and outline the potential implementation of ePortfolios into the two pathways in *Ethics and Society* and *Criticism and Culture*. To further this work and tap into expert resources, Capital University applied to and was accepted to participate in AAC&U's 2022 Institute on ePortfolios. A team of five staff and faculty have participated in programming, seminars, and mentoring activities since January 2022 to develop and implement an ePortfolio component into the undergraduate curriculum. A pilot project will start with the *Ethics and Society* sequence in Fall 2022. An outshoot from this work has been the development of a Reflective Practice Community of Practice in Summer 2022, partially funded by a Michael and Paige Crane Opportunity Grant. Thirteen faculty and staff have formed a learning community to learn about reflective pedagogy, its impact on student learning, assessment, and the development of ePortfolios. The hope is that this community will seed and support further development on reflective practice across campus.

Communication of Assessment Work

Assessment results from 2020-2021 were shared early in Fall 2021 with multiple groups, for example, the Signature Learning Committee and the Provost's Student Learning and Development Committee. Individual program assessment reports were reviewed and feedback shared with the programs. Reports were placed in the Assessment folder in the Academic Resources Sharepoint site. In addition, the Assessment website, <https://www.capital.edu/outcomes-assessment/>, was updated to reflect the more recent results.

The Showcase of Student Learning focused again on the assessment of Signature Learning Outcomes. Eight posters were shared and discussed on May 10, 2022. This event fosters the sharing of assessment methods and ideas across academic and student support programs.

Program Review

The Program Review process was modified in 2020-2021 with the implementation of *Anthology's Planning* platform to capture programs' analyses and plans for change. In 2021-2022, the plan items were revised to include a broader set of analyses. This was augmented by the development of a self-paced online course with written materials and videos to walk programs through the review process and entry of information in *Planning*. The course enabled programs to complete the review in a timeframe that maximized faculty and staff participation. Supportive materials, for example, curriculum/programming mapping matrices, past assessment reports, student success information, and information about peer institutions were provided for programs.

Improvements Task Force

Although faculty are involved and take ownership of assessment at the program-level and for the Signature Learning Outcomes (through the Signature Learning Committee), there has not been a faculty committee that oversees broader assessment. To address this, Capital formed the Improvement Task Force in Fall 2021 to engage more faculty in the discussion of student learning and effectiveness at the institutional level. After observing a positive trend in first-year student responses on Reflection and Integrative Learning items on the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) survey, the task force started an investigation of how these learning outcomes are addressed in first-year courses. Conversations with faculty teaching these courses generated ideas for support for the delivery of these outcomes and avenues for additional research. The University also is looking at ways to strengthen the infrastructure for communication of assessment results to all constituents.

Additional Institutional Assessments and Evaluations

Capital University engages in multiple modes of assessment beyond the assessment of student learning outcomes and program review. In Spring 2020, Capital University switched to a completely online delivery format due to the COVID pandemic. In assessing the needs of the students, it became clear that not all students had access to reliable technology. In Fall 2021, the University rolled out *Project Indigo!* in which all undergraduates, faculty and staff were given an iPad. The purpose of this initiative is to enhance student learning and success through 1) promoting access and affordability for educational technology, 2) transforming and enriching teaching and learning across curricular and co-curricular experiences, and 3) promoting and enhancing student success services. Fall 2021 surveys of students, staff, and faculty indicated positive responses and established baseline levels of usage, comfort with technology, and expectations. Spring 2022 surveys continued to demonstrate positive responses and increased levels of comfort using the iPad. Faculty reported using iPads most frequently to access the learning management system, files, and texts or readings. The iPads gave staff more mobile access to resources and enabled note taking. Students most frequently used the iPads to access academic resources and support their coursework. To quote one student, *“It has been the best thing to happen as a student, I am now 100% digital and I download electronic versions of my textbook and take my notes on OneDrive. As long as I have my iPad on me, I can access anything for class at anytime without weighing down my bookbag. It has significantly helped and I have been happy to go fully electronic and cut down on my paper waste.”* Many indicated that it provided them with a much-needed computer or allowed a second device to more effectively access resources while working on assignments.

Student perception of the quality of academic advising is assessed annually by the Advising Snapshot survey. This year it was distributed to students in April 2022. The survey was completed by 222 students, which was lower than in previous years, and led to small numbers of respondents for several departments. As in past years, overall ratings were positive ($X = 2.47$ on a 3-point scale), with variation in ratings for specific departments. In general, students rated advisor behaviors that focused on the advising relationship highest, including: *keeps appointments* ($X = 2.68$), *treats me with respect* ($X = 2.67$), *respects my identity and culture* ($X =$

2.65), and *listens effectively* ($X = 2.59$). The behaviors with lowest overall means reflect more direct advising behaviors: *assisted me in education plan* ($X = 2.34$), *asks me about academic progress* ($X = 2.30$), *assists in career guidance* ($X = 2.25$), and *helps me connect with resources* ($X = 2.20$).

The university uses the *Anthology IDEA Course Evaluation* platform to assess student perceptions of courses, instructors, and student progress on learning outcomes. These are analyzed on an institutional and curricular unit level in Fall and Spring semesters. Response rates continued to be lower than desired with 46.03% of undergraduates participating in Fall 2021 and 39.65% in Spring 2022. Graduate rates were higher with 57.91% of students completing evaluations in the Fall and 53.64% in Spring. Overall, mean ratings of the instructor, the course, progress on relevant outcomes, and summary measure for undergraduate and graduate courses were positive, yet slightly lower in Spring 2022 than in recent semesters. In 76% of Fall 2021 undergraduate course sections and 91% of graduate sections, student mean ratings were a 4.0 or higher (on a 5-point scale) on a statement regarding the excellence of the instructor. In 69% of undergraduate sections and 77% of graduate sections, mean ratings of the course as being excellent were a 4.0 or higher. In Spring 2022, mean ratings of the excellence of the instructor were 4.0 or higher in 75% of undergraduate course sections and 79% of graduate sections. In 67% of undergraduate sections and 77% of graduate sections, mean ratings of the course as being excellent were a 4.0 or higher.

In both Fall and Spring semesters, instructor behaviors of demonstrating the importance of the subject matter and how topics fit into the course, relating course material to real life situations, and encouraging students to reflect on and evaluate what they were learning were reported on average as the most frequent for both undergraduate and graduate students. Students reported instructor behaviors of forming teams or groups to facilitate learning as least frequent at both degree levels. Undergraduate and graduate students reported the most progress on the learning objectives of gaining a basic understanding of the course subject, learning to apply the content, and developing the skills, competencies, and perspectives needed in their professions. Perhaps due to the more focused nature of the objectives, lower progress was noted by undergraduate students on learning methods to collect, analyze, and interpret numerical information, and developing creative capacities. Graduates students also reported less progress on developing creative capacities and gaining a broader appreciation of intellectual and cultural activity. Variations in ratings across course sections and curricular units were noted.

Higher Learning Commission Reaccreditation Preparation

Capital University has been preparing for a reaccreditation review from the Higher Learning Commission, consisting of a site visit on October 3-4, 2022, and review of Capital's Assurance Argument and Federal Compliance Filing. Five teams, one for each accreditation criterion, continued to work on identifying and assembling evidence and crafted the Assurance Argument narrative. The institution has developed an online course to facilitate communication of the components of the Assurance Argument and key evidence pieces and suggestions for site visit participation.

Professional Development and Consultations

The assessment office, in collaboration with the provost's office, has offered numerous professional development opportunities and consultations. In Fall semester, instruction on entering assessment plans was given at the Student Development and Learning Committee and through workshops on September 27, 2021 and October 19, 2021. This instruction was followed up with individual consultations (16 in Fall 2021). In Spring (on 5/11/2022), another assessment workshop was held to walk faculty and staff through entering their results into the *Outcomes* platform. Individual and small group consultations continued in Spring 2022 ($N = 31$) on entering outcomes, program review, and specialized accreditation needs. The Director of Assessment also offered assessment guidance to several communities of practice, including Community Engagement, Ethics and Society, Criticism and Culture, Social Justice, as well as the Signature Learning Committee. Support was provided for programs undergoing specialized reaccreditation reviews, in particular, Social Work, Trinity Seminary, and Law School programs.

Summary

Capital University was fully engaged in assessment and evaluation processes in 2021-2022. The institution made gains in further clarifying Signature Learning Outcomes; assessing student achievement on these outcomes, as well as individual program outcomes; developing rubrics; scaffolding assignments across sections and course sequences; and working to implement ePortfolios into the curriculum to enhance student reflective and integrative learning. Programs engaged in institutional program review and specialized accreditation reviews for discipline-specific bodies. In addition to direct assessment measures, Capital evaluated other endeavors through surveys, including the implementation of Project Indigo!, academic advising, and student perception of teaching and courses. The implementation of the *Anthology* platform has enabled the institution to capture, store, integrate and analyze data to improve student learning and success. Capital's work in assessment and institutional effectiveness was recognized by *Anthology* with a 2022 Catalyst Award.

Submitted by Linda G. Wolf, Ph.D., Director of Assessment and Student Success Analyst, 08/09/2022.

Appendix A

Signature Learning Program Learning Outcomes and Descriptions (2022-2023 Undergraduate Bulletin)

Students apply the skills of a liberally educated person to investigate problems and questions.

The liberal arts include a set of subjects, practices, and investigations that orient each student's life-long growth and sense of vocation. Through inquiry and reflection across the student experience, students integrate and apply critical thinking, effective communication, cultural awareness, and ethical sensitivity to progressively challenging situations and contexts.

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.)

Students identify and reflect on physical, intellectual, emotional, and social components of life transitions. Students develop goals for future personal, social, and professional wellbeing.

Students access, evaluate, interpret, and produce quantitative and qualitative information to solve problems.

Students are empowered to create and use information to achieve their personal, social, educational, and professional goals. Students recognize gaps and limits in existing knowledge. Students effectively access, organize, evaluate, and interpret data to produce information for solving problems and drawing conclusions.

Students articulate basic principles, methods, and societal effects of natural and social sciences

Students identify and practice methods of inquiry in social and natural sciences, including laboratory methods. Students develop scientific literacy by practicing reasoning skills and applying major scientific paradigms. Students explore the impact of science on society.

Students speak, write, read, and listen effectively

Students actively listen, process, and critically evaluate information. Students use information ethically and with integrity. Students practice effective written and oral communication strategies for multiple audiences in various modes.

Students analyze, contextualize, and engage with human cultures.

Students engage with varied artistic, religious, and historical cultural products and systems. Students produce art in different forms. Students appreciate the moral implications of engagement with human cultures in a global context.

Students interact knowledgeably and ethically with people and ideas from many cultures, religions, and identities.

Students use and critically evaluate different moral frameworks that inform their lived experience. Students identify themselves to be members of diverse communities, analyzing sources of misunderstanding, conflict, and injustice. Students develop an appreciation for diverse ways of life. Students develop ethical sensitivity that informs thought and behavior in personal, communal, and global contexts.