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Executive Summary

The GateWay Community College Institutional Assessment Handbook establishes a foundation for assessing student learning at GateWay. The assessment process described in this plan demonstrates GateWay’s commitment to helping students achieve educational excellence through a continuous cycle of assessment of their learning outcomes at the Institutional, Program, and Course levels of learning. As a community college that offers both degrees and certificates in traditional academic programs as well as professional, occupational, and technical trades, GateWay's assessment strategy embraces the demonstration of student learning in a variety of academic and hands-on learning environments. Therefore, this handbook describes the processes by which the culture of assessment is created, reinforced, and sustained within GateWay, creating a sustainable cycle of assessment for the College.

Guiding Principles for Learning Outcomes Assessment

Assessment at GateWay is guided by several internal measures including: GateWay’s Mission, Vision, Goals, and Values (Appendix A) statements and Gateway’s Strategic Plan (Appendix B). In addition to Gateway’s internal measures for guiding Learning Outcomes Assessment, there
are external key standards for excellence in outcomes assessment that Gateway has also adopted. These include the Higher Learning Commission’s standards for accreditation and regulatory compliance, the American Association of Higher Education’s *Principles of Good Practice for Assessing Student Learning*, and The National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment’s, *Transparency Framework*. All of these documents represent recognized best practices in assessment and create the standards by which GateWay structures its Learning Outcomes Assessment practices.

**Accreditation and Regulatory Compliance**

GateWay is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) and adheres to HLC *Criteria for Accreditation and Assumed Practices*. GateWay utilizes these criteria in order to provide a framework for creating and sustaining good assessment practices. Criteria 4.B. primarily addresses assessment of student learning; however, many criteria and assumed practices relate to the assessment work in which faculty, instructors, staff, and the GateWay Learning Outcomes Committee engages (Appendix C). Incorporating these guidelines helps GateWay to remain in alignment with HLC accreditation standards while also strengthening its commitment to providing excellence in education to its stakeholders.

**9 Principles of Good Practice for Assessing Student Learning (AAHE)**

The American Association for Higher Education (AAHE) established nine principles of good practice for assessing student learning in 1992. These principles guide the assessment practices at the College. Detailed descriptions are available in Appendix D.

1. The assessment of student learning begins with educational values.
2. Assessment is most effective when it reflects an understanding of learning as multidimensional, integrated, and revealed in performance over time.
3. Assessment works best when the programs it seeks to improve have clear, explicitly stated purposes.
4. Assessment requires attention to outcomes but also and equally to the experiences that lead to those outcomes.
5. Assessment works best when it is ongoing, not episodic.
6. Assessment fosters wider improvement when representatives from across the educational community are involved.
7. Assessment makes a difference when it begins with issues of use and illuminates questions that people really care about.
8. Assessment is most likely to lead to improvement when it is part of a larger set of conditions that promote change.
9. Through assessment, educators meet responsibilities to students and to the public.
NILOA Transparency Framework

The National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment’s (NILOA) Transparency Framework outlines an aspirational framework for the College to use to evaluate and improve how it communicates learning outcomes and assessment practices to students and other external constituents. George D. Kuh writes, “The framework is a tool that institutions can use to evaluate how well their websites are communicating learning outcomes assessment information to the intended audiences… the Transparency Framework is a guide for individual institutions to examine and rethink how they are communicating what they consider to be relevant information via their websites.” The framework has six components outlined below with more resources provided in the link below.

[Image of hexagonal diagram with components: Student Learning Outcomes Statements, Assessment Plans, Use of Student Learning Evidence, Assessment Resources, Evidence of Student Learning, Current Assessment Activities]


Roles of Assessment

The arrangement of roles within GateWay’s culture of assessment is guided by the three-tiered level of assessment that occurs at the Institutional, Program, and Course levels of assessment. Structure of roles is dependent upon the focus of the assessment.
Roles at the Institutional Level
The institutional level of assessment focuses its efforts on how the Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILO)s are being assessed, their analysis, and implementation of actionable steps based on the outcomes of those assessments. The institutional level of assessment is guided by three key roles including: College Leadership, the Gateway Learning Outcomes committee (GLO), and the Office of Institutional Effectiveness.

College Leadership
The Vice President of Academic Affairs and the Vice President of Student Affairs provide the vision for assessment at the College. The Associate Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness serves as the College’s Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO) and is responsible for ensuring the institution maintains compliance with HLC’s Criteria for Accreditation.

GateWay Learning Outcomes (GLO) Committee
The GLO Committee is the primary college committee charged with implementing and overseeing the college’s comprehensive model of assessment and is part of the College’s shared governance structure. The GLO charter states that the committee will “develop and implement a model for the assessment of student learning across the institution to determine the extent to which the institution is fulfilling its mission of educating students.” GLO Committee members are comprised of faculty, instructors, and staff who are representing various programs in academic, professional trade & technical, and co-curricular areas of the college. The committee members thus, represent the voice of the people who are undertaking assessment initiatives as well as being the representing voice of the assessment committee to their various programs.

Sub-committees
As a working committee, the full committee delegates work to appropriate sub-committees to expedite decision-making and completion of work. Each sub-committee has a chair or co-chair who is tasked with leading the committee’s work, calling meetings, delegating tasks, etc. Sub-committees are responsible for moving assessment initiatives forward and reporting progress from those initiatives to the full committee.

Office of Institutional Effectiveness
The role of the Office of Institutional Effectiveness in the assessment of learning outcomes at GateWay is to:

- Promote a culture of evidence and continuous improvement at the College
- Ensure alignment of assessment with the College’s mission, vision, and strategic goals
- Provide support to academic and co-curricular areas to enhance their department’s assessment efforts
In addition, GateWay employs an Assessment Coordinator that reports under the Institutional Effectiveness division. The Assessment Coordinator is tasked with:

- Supporting the sustainability of effective and consistent assessment practices across the college
- Facilitating development of the college’s assessment plan, coordinate collection, evaluation, and dissemination of assessment findings
- Consulting with and guiding division chairs, assessment champions, and other faculty in developing program learning outcomes, assessment tools, and interpreting and using results to make improvements for both new and existing programs of study
- Assisting co-curricular service areas with development of assessment plans, implementation of the plan, and improvement through direct and/or indirect measures of student learning tied to institutional learning outcomes and department goals
- Preparing forms, reports, publications, correspondence related to assessment policies and processes
- Maintaining a repository for evidence and reports, and in collaboration with the assessment committee disseminate reports

Roles at the Program and Course Level

Faculty, Instructors, and Staff

Ownership of assessment practices and procedures lies with GateWay’s faculty, instructors, and staff. Research substantiates the need for instructional ownership and participation being central to creating successful assessment processes (Neuschel & Rego, 2018). Therefore, faculty, instructors, and staff of all student-facing programs, both academic and co-curricular areas, are responsible for developing program-learning outcomes that best represent the learning outcomes that students in their programs should achieve, creating effective measurement tools, setting student performance expectations, analyzing results, and implementing action plans aimed at improving outcomes of future students. This cooperative approach to creating assessment practices, driven by the faculty, instructors, and staff, creates an effective and collaborative culture of assessment at GateWay Community College.

Assessment Process

Evidence at Many Levels

The assessment process at GateWay Community College is grounded in a three-tiered system of assessment processes that occur at the Institutional Level, Program Level, and Course Level. The three-tiered system allows for consistency of learning outcomes throughout the college. The
Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs) guide the creation of Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs), which in turn, guide the creation of Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs). The presence of consistent Institutional-Level Learning Outcomes will be evident in each subsequent level of assessment and serve to focus the type of learning outcomes desired for GateWay’s students.

**Institutional Level**
Learning outcomes at all three levels, Course, Program, and Institutional, are guided by GateWay’s Institutional Learning Outcomes. One of the goals of learning outcome achievement at the institutional level is that regardless of the program, all students who graduate from GateWay Community College will be able to demonstrate proficiency in GateWay’s Institutional Learning Outcomes. All programs and courses at GateWay are mapped to, and guided by, these three integral learning outcomes. They are as follows:

**Effective Communication**
Learners will communicate effectively in a range of social, academic, and professional contexts as defined by five competency areas: emotional intelligence, active listening, written, oral and visual modes, effective use of technology, and collaboration skills.

**Effective Critical Thinking and Problem Solving**
Learners will develop the mindset to gather, organize, synthesize, analyze, and evaluate information to solve problems and make evidence-based decisions as defined by four competency areas: metacognition, decision-making, information literacy, and analytical inquiry/quantitative reasoning.

**Personal Responsibility and Civic Engagement**
Learners will demonstrate personal growth and responsibility to others by addressing diverse cultural, civic, social, or global issues.

**Program Level**

**Academic**
Program-level academic assessment looks at how well students have achieve their program learning outcomes (PLOs) by the end of their program of study. GateWay has degree and certificate programs at the Associate in Arts (AA), Associate in Business (ABUS), Associate in General Studies (AGS), Associate in Sciences (AS), Associate in Applied Sciences (AAS), Associate of Arts in Elementary Education (AAEE), Certificate of Completion (CCL) and Certificate of Competency (CCT). Each degree and certificate program has Program Learning Outcomes that are assessed according to methodology set out by program/division chairs guided by input from faculty, instructors, and staff.
**General Education**
Assessment of General Education is focused on courses that are required by the Arizona General Education Curriculum (AGEC). These are the General Education course requirements within the AA/AS/ABUS degrees without the electives necessary in order to complete the degree. General Education Assessment practices includes all students that are in AGEC courses and are not limited to assessing only the students that are in the AA/AS/ABUS degree programs.

**Co-curricular**
Co-curricular is defined at GateWay as any experience that results in significant learning outside of the classroom. Co-curricular assessment at GateWay was developed based on the idea that every department that is student-facing has the opportunity to help students to learn. The idea that learning is not only facilitated in the classroom, but also in extracurricular activities, clubs, service learning, and even in service areas such as the career center, library and learning center helps clubs to focus on what the learning component is of their department. The idea that learning happens in many areas of the campus and therefore, has the opportunity for relevant and meaningful assessment is substantiated by Suskie’s (2015) approach to assessment.

*These kinds of out-of-classroom experiences—those that help students achieve meaningful learning outcomes in concert with academic study—are co-curricular learning experiences. Co-curricular learning experiences can include: athletics; collaborative learning experiences; cultural experiences such as lectures, exhibits, and performances; field experiences such as internships, practicums, and clinical activities; first-year experiences; learning communities; service learning experiences; student activities such as clubs; student support services such as tutoring, advisement, counseling, health and safety, and library. Extracurricular activities are those not explicitly connected to academic learning, perhaps events such as karaoke nights, hip hop shows, and spring flings. (p. 6)*

**Course Level**
In the Maricopa Community College District (MCCC)D, ownership of course curriculum resides in the discipline’s Instructional Council (IC) that is comprised of discipline subject matter experts (SMEs) from colleges in the district. MCCC’s Center for Curriculum and Transfer Articulation (CCTA) maintains the repository of approved courses, curriculum, and competencies. Because GateWay does not exercise authority over policy and process, we do not have independent CLOs. However, course level assessment does occur at GateWay and is guided by a multitude of factors. Please see Assessment Cycle CLOs for an expanded explanation.
Assessment Cycle

ILOs
While assessment and improvement for all three of the ILOs may occur anytime during the cycle, GateWay is committed to gaining an institution-wide perspective of its progress in achieving its ILOs on a three-year, staggered cycle (e.g., year 1: communication; year 2: critical thinking and problem solving; year 3: civic engagement and personal development; repeat). Institutional Effectiveness is responsible for developing methodologies to aggregate data and information at an institutional-level that allow stakeholders to better steer decisions and develop improvement processes to meet their institutional commitment to students learning. Institutional Effectiveness will provide reports and presentations of the findings to executive leadership, Faculty Senate, Strategic Academic Leadership Team (SALT), Student Affairs Council, and the GateWay Learning Outcomes Committee (GLO). Leadership within these groups will be responsible for communicating findings to their respective constituents and using these findings to help drive institutional improvement.

PLOS
GateWay’s faculty and staff are responsible for establishing individualized assessment plans that include a reasonable assessment cycle for each of their PLOs. (Note: a program could be an academic or co-curricular program.) Every academic program must assess at least one PLO per year according to the program's individualized assessment plan. Programs that require PLO assessment as part of their program’s accreditation process will be permitted to use their accreditation cycle to meet the requirements of PLO assessment for the college.

The program’s faculty, instructors, and/or staff are responsible for including assessment activities in their program review report (see program review template). While the program review processes and cycle are outside of the scope of this handbook, programs should align their assessment and program review cycles so they can discuss the improvements they have made and gaps they would like to bridge before their next program review.

GateWay also expects faculty, instructors, and staff to document their assessment activities for each PLO in the SPOL Assessment System during each “planning year” (i.e., Fiscal Year). While we recognize that the program’s assessment cycle may not align with the planning year, faculty should document the efforts they undertook during the planning year for the PLO(s) they did assess. At the end of each planning year, Institutional Effectiveness will run a report for each program that summarizes the work that program has completed over the prior three planning years for their PLOs. This report will be shared with the Dean, Division Chair, and Program Director/Chair/Coordinator.
Even though GateWay does not own course curriculum, it is still committed to continuous quality improvement at the course level, specifically regarding student learning. Instead of assessing individual CLOs across all courses and disciplines, GateWay will select 3 to 5 courses each year, with the advice and consent of the Vice President of Academic Affairs (VPAA) and Strategic Academic Leadership Team (SALT), to engage in a quality improvement project focused on student learning. The decision as to which courses are selected will be informed by examining student success data at the course level and may include indicators such as successful completion rates, DFWI rates, retention to subsequent course rates, etc. The GLO committee will assign faculty representatives on the committee to facilitate the quality improvement project. The faculty representative will help the faculty in the discipline to develop strategies to improve outcomes. Institutional Effectiveness will be responsible for helping to identify and provide data that help support and measure improvement and support the improvement project. Examples of potential improvements may include:

- **Course Alignment:** An aligned course means that the student learning outcomes, learning activities, and formative and summative assessments connect in a way that allows you to accurately assess the things you want the students to know or be able to do as a results of taking your course. By aligning these aspects of learning, the course is more effective, students receive a consistent message as to what they should learn, and students spend most of their effort learning the intended outcomes.

- **Curriculum Redesign:** Redesigning curriculum is not an easy feat or one that should be made without much intentional thought. In Maricopa Community Colleges, curriculum is managed by the district-wide Instructional Councils (ICs) for your discipline. If you feel that the curriculum is hindering student success, please have conversations with your peers and ICs.

- **High Impact Practices:** High impact practices are strategies that faculty can utilize in their courses that have been shown to be beneficial for college students from varied backgrounds and suggest increase the rates of student success. Practices include, learning communities, common educational experiences, service learning, collaborative assignments, undergraduate research, etc.

- **Identifying Gaps in Prerequisite Knowledge:** In the perfect setting, students would enter each classroom with precisely the right amount of prerequisite knowledge. However, we know that students enter college at different levels of readiness and progress through their curriculum at varied speeds. Assuming students are ready on day one may put some or many students at risk of failure. Understanding their readiness for your course may help you advise them into a more appropriate course or to supplemental material to “catch up” to their peers.

- **Innovative Pedagogies:** Recognizing when and where students are struggling allow you to consider innovative ways to meet the student where they are. The pedagogical strategies you consider are highly dependent to your discipline, but consider engaging your peers in the department, keep up-to-date on best practices from leaders in your field, or trying new approaches that engage students and contextualize their learning. You may
want to also consider providing additional learning opportunities in the same or alternative settings.

- Providing Supplemental Orientation Material: We know that many students come to college without knowing or understanding many of the administrative processes necessary to be successful in college. Some have grit to achieve, while other may not understand when and how to seek help. Success in an individual course may be influenced by... understanding when the withdraw date is and reasons when withdrawing may be beneficial. ...knowing where the tutoring center is and how to schedule appointments. ...what types of questions they should be asking and when. ...understanding what resources are available to them.

Documentation & Dissemination
GateWay purchased the Strategic Planning Online (SPOL) System’s Assessment Module as the College’s Assessment Management System (AMS) in spring 2019. While the system is relatively new, the College plans to use the AMS to plan, collect, monitor, and evaluate the College’s assessment practices. The AMS will be used to collect, monitor, and report our commitment to assessing at the institution and program levels. It is the college’s intention to build a repository in the system that will help inform evidence-based improvements to student learning.

Evaluation of Institutional Assessment plan
The Institutional Assessment Handbook is owned by the GateWay Learning Outcomes (GLO) committee and is the guiding document for committee work. This plan should be a fluid document that addresses changes to practice that originate from local or Maricopa Community College District needs. The GLO committee reserves the right to amend this document at any time based on the needs of the college, but the handbook should be reviewed, at minimum, at the beginning of each academic year. Historical versions should be archived and accessible on the committee’s document repository (i.e., SharePoint or similar site).

Appendices

A. GateWay’s Vision, Mission, Goals & Values

Vision
GateWay Community College—a college for the community—works collectively and responsibly to meet the life-long learning needs of our diverse students and community.

Mission
GateWay Community College provides access to higher education for diverse students and communities. We focus on learning through:

- University Transfer Education
- General Education
Goals
GateWay Community College, including the Maricopa Skill Center and GateWay Early College High School, in achieving the mission of the College, is committed to the following strategic goals and objectives:

- **Access**
  Provide access to high-quality education for all students and strengthen educational pathways through increased educational and business partnerships.

- **Learning**
  Promote and support opportunities for learning and development

- **Success**
  Increase the number of students who achieve their education or training goals, complete a degree or certificate, transfer to a university, and/or complete a workforce credential.

- **Community Engagement**
  Enhance civic, social, and cultural engagement opportunities by serving as the community’s college.

- **Entrepreneurism**
  Expand and leverage resources that enhance the college’s impact in the community through economic and workforce development.

- **Stewardship**
  Strategically leverage, grow and utilize resources to ensure student success, responsible stewardship and sustainability

Values
Students are the primary reason we exist. We value our diverse learning community and respect our students for their life experiences and their achievements, and we appreciate their contributions. For these reasons, GateWay is committed to the following values:

- **Learning**
  As a lifelong endeavor of growth and self-discovery.

- **Diversity**
  As a celebration of the unique richness that all individuals bring to our community and to the learning opportunity it provides.
• **Service**  
  To students, to each other, and to the community.

• **Teamwork**  
  As a commitment to working together toward student success.

• **Integrity**  
  As an essential element in our learning environment. We strive to be honest, authentic, consistent, and respectful in our words and actions.

• **Entrepreneurial Spirit**  
  As critical in accomplishing our mission and goals. Through calculated risk-taking, we see possibilities . . . not limitations.

**B. GateWay’s 2016-2019 Strategic Planning**

1. **Access**: Provide access to high-quality education for all students and strengthen educational pathways through increased educational and business partnerships.

2. **Learning**: Promote and support opportunities for learning and development.

3. **Success**: Increase the number of students who achieve their education or training goals, complete a degree or certificate, transfer to a university, and/or complete a workforce credential.

4. **Community Engagement**: Enhance civic, social and cultural engagement opportunities by serving as the community’s college.

5. **Entrepreneurialism**: Expand and leverage resources that enhance the college’s impact in the community through economic and workforce development.

6. **Stewardship**: Strategically leverage, grow, and utilize resources to ensure student success, responsible stewardship, and sustainability.

**C. Higher Learning Commission Associated Criteria & Practices**

**Criteria for Accreditation (CRRT.B.10.010):**

3.A.1. Courses and programs are current and require levels of performance by students appropriate to the degree or certificate awarded.

3.A.2. The institutional articulates and differentiates learning goals for its undergraduate, graduate, post-baccalaureate, post-graduate, and certification programs.

3.A.3. The institution’s program quality and learning goals are consistent across all modes of delivery and all locations.

3.B.2. The institution articulates the purposes, content, and intended learning outcomes of its undergraduate general education requirements. The program of general education is grounded in a philosophy or framework developed by the institution or adopted from an established
framework. It imparts broad knowledge and intellectual concepts to students and develops skills and attitudes that the institution believes every college-educated person should possess.

3.B.3. Every degree program offered by the institution engages students in collecting, analyzing, and communicating information; in mastering modes of inquiry or creative work; and in developing skills adaptable to changing environments.

3.C.1. The institution has sufficient numbers and continuity of faculty members to carry out both the classroom and non-classroom roles of faculty, including oversight of the curriculum and expectations for student performance; establishment of academic credentials for instructional staff; involvement in assessment of student learning.

3.E.1. Co-curricular programs are suited to the institution’s mission and contribute to the educational experience of its students.

4.A.4. The institution maintains and exercises authority over the prerequisites for courses, rigor of courses, expectations for student learning, access to learning resources, and faculty qualifications for all its programs, including dual credit programs. It assures that its dual credit courses or programs for high school students are equivalent in learning outcomes and level of achievement to its higher education curriculum.

4.B. The institutional demonstrates a commitment to education achievement and improvement through ongoing assessment of student learning.

4.B.1. The institution has clearly stated goals for student learning and effective processes for assessment of student learning and achievement of student goals.

4.B.2. The institution assesses achievement of the learning outcomes that it claims for its curricular and co-curricular programs.

4.B.3. The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.

4.B.4. The institution’s processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including substantial participation of faculty and other instructional staff members.

5.C.2. The institution links its processes for assessment of student learning, evaluation of operations, planning, and budgeting.

5.D. The institution works systematically to improve its performance.

Assumed Practices (CRRT.B.10.020):

A.6. The institution assures that all data it makes public are accurate and complete, including those reporting on student achievement of learning and student persistence, retention, and completion.
B.2.d.d. Faculty participate substantially in analysis of data and appropriate action on assessment of student learning and program completion.

C.6. Institutional data on assessment of student learning are accurate and address the full range of students who enroll.

D. AAHE’s Nine Principles of Good Practice for Assessing Student Learning

1. **The assessment of student learning begins with educational values.** Assessment is not an end in itself but a vehicle for educational improvement. Its effective practice, then, begins with and enacts a vision of the kinds of learning we most value for students and strive to help them achieve. Educational values should drive not only what we choose to assess but also how we do so. Where questions about educational mission and values are skipped over, assessment threatens to be an exercise in measuring what's easy, rather than a process of improving what we really care about.

2. **Assessment is most effective when it reflects an understanding of learning as multidimensional, integrated, and revealed in performance over time.** Learning is a complex process. It entails not only what students know but what they can do with what they know; it involves not only knowledge and abilities but values, attitudes, and habits of mind that affect both academic success and performance beyond the classroom. Assessment should reflect these understandings by employing a diverse array of methods including those that call for actual performance, using them over time so as to reveal change, growth, and increasing degrees of integration. Such an approach aims for a more complete and accurate picture of learning, and therefore firmer bases for improving our students' educational experience.

3. **Assessment works best when the programs it seeks to improve have clear, explicitly stated purposes.** Assessment is a goal-oriented process. It entails comparing educational performance with educational purposes and expectations-these derived from the institution's mission, from faculty intentions in program and course design, and from knowledge of students' own goals. Where program purposes lack specificity or agreement, assessment as a process pushes a campus toward clarity about where to aim and what standards to apply; assessment also prompts attention to where and how program goals will be taught and learned. Clear, shared, implementable goals are the cornerstone for assessment that is focused and useful.

4. **Assessment requires attention to outcomes but also and equally to the experiences that lead to those outcomes.** Information about outcomes is of high importance; where students "end up" matters greatly. But to improve outcomes, we need to know about student experience along the way—about the curricula, teaching, and kind of student effort that lead to particular outcomes. Assessment can help understand which students learn best under what conditions; with such knowledge comes the capacity to improve the whole of their learning.

5. **Assessment works best when it is ongoing, not episodic.** Assessment is a process whose power is cumulative. Though isolated, "one-shot" assessment can be better than none, improvement is best fostered when assessment entails a linked series of activities undertaken...
over time. This may mean tracking the progress of individual students, or of cohorts of students; it may mean collecting the same examples of student performance or using the same instrument semester after semester. The point is to monitor progress toward intended goals in a spirit of continuous improvement. Along the way, the assessment process itself should be evaluated and refined in light of emerging insights.

6. **Assessment fosters wider improvement when representatives from across the educational community are involved.** Student learning is a campus-wide responsibility, and assessment is a way of enacting that responsibility. Thus, while assessment efforts may start small, the aim over time is to involve people from across the educational community. Faculty play an especially important role, but assessment's questions can't be fully addressed without participation by student-affairs educators, librarians, administrators, and students. Assessment may also involve individuals from beyond the campus (alumni/ae, trustees, employers) whose experience can enrich the sense of appropriate aims and standards for learning. Thus, understood, assessment is not a task for small groups of experts but a collaborative activity; its aim is wider, better-informed attention to student learning by all parties with a stake in its improvement.

7. **Assessment makes a difference when it begins with issues of use and illuminates questions that people really care about.** Assessment recognizes the value of information in the process of improvement. But to be useful, information must be connected to issues or questions that people really care about. This implies assessment approaches that produce evidence that relevant parties will find credible, suggestive, and applicable to decisions that need to be made. It means thinking in advance about how the information will be used, and by whom. The point of assessment is not to gather data and return "results"; it is a process that starts with the questions of decision-makers, that involves them in the gathering and interpreting of data, and that informs and helps guide continuous improvement.

8. **Assessment is most likely to lead to improvement when it is part of a larger set of conditions that promote change.** Assessment alone changes little. Its greatest contribution comes on campuses where the quality of teaching and learning is visibly valued and worked at. On such campuses, the push to improve educational performance is a visible and primary goal of leadership; improving the quality of undergraduate education is central to the institution's planning, budgeting, and personnel decisions. On such campuses, information about learning outcomes is seen as an integral part of decision making, and avidly sought.

9. **Through assessment, educators meet responsibilities to students and to the public.** There is compelling public stake in education. As educators, we have a responsibility to the publics that support or depend on us to provide information about the ways in which our students meet goals and expectations. But that responsibility goes beyond the reporting of such information; our deeper obligation-to ourselves, our students, and society-is to improve. Those to whom educators are accountable have a corresponding obligation to support such attempts at improvement.

**E. Governance Structure**

Please see the Gecko Portal (SharePoint) for the most recent Committee Structure Chart: [Link](#)
F. Institutional Learning Outcomes Rubrics

Effective Communication Rubric
Critical Thinking and Problem Solving Rubric
Personal Responsibility and Civic Engagement Rubric

Sources
