

**Comprehensive Plan for Sustaining
Assessment Practices
to Enhance Student Learning at
The University of Scranton**

Office of Educational Assessment

Approved by Assessment Advisory Committee, January 15, 2016

Approved by Faculty Senate, March 8, 2016

Updated by AAC, October 24, 2017

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Introduction and Background

The University of Scranton instituted a decentralized model for assessment of student learning in the late 1990s. Following an effort to centralize efforts under a Comprehensive Assessment Plan in 2004, the University returned to a decentralized model in the latter part of that decade, in which each division assumed responsibility for assessment: The College of Arts & Sciences (CAS), The Panuska College of Professional Studies (PCPS), Kania School of Management (KSOM), The Library, and Student Affairs (now Student Formation and Campus Life). In November 2013, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) issued a warning with respect to its Standard 14: Assessment of Student Learning. The University responded by creating a more visible and coherent infrastructure, namely the faculty-led Office of Educational Assessment (OEA). The Office operates under the supervision of an Associate Provost for Institutional Effectiveness and is closely aligned with the offices of Planning & Institutional Effectiveness and Institutional Research. Presently it is staffed by two faculty Directors, five Faculty Fellows, and a part-time Assessment Analyst. The Assessment Advisory Committee (AAC), whose members are appointed by the Faculty Senate, counsels the OEA. In November 2014, MSCHE lifted the warning with the proviso that sustained assessment efforts continue in conjunction with a manageable cycle for ongoing improvement of student learning.

The OEA undertook an analysis of structures and processes already in place in AY 2014-15. Data for the analysis included college and University documents, as well as formal and informal conversations with those involved in assessment at all levels. From this analysis, the OEA concluded the following:

- Existing assessment structures and processes operate in silos.
- Evidence of student learning is inconsistently reported and communicated.
- Program improvement is infrequently driven by evidence.
- Program assessment remains isolated and inconsistent across programs without external, professional accreditation pressures.

Purpose

This plan outlines a comprehensive strategy for the University's centralized system of assessment cycles and reporting procedures. Improvements to student learning are thus part of a formal cycle of analyzing, disseminating, and acting upon evidence gathered. In many cases, the new processes represent a refinement and articulation

of those already in place, thereby enhancing assessment at the program level and furthering the institution's capacity for self-evaluation.

The plan pays particular attention to the importance of the University's Catholic and Jesuit mission: namely, its dedication to freedom of inquiry and to the development of wisdom and integrity of all its members. Drawing on underlying concepts from the Ignatian pedagogical paradigm¹, the University's student learning assessment plan ensures on-going evaluation in an effort to build a sustained, evidence-based process for assessing student learning outcomes across programs and curricula.

Evaluation is one of five elements of the Ignatian educational paradigm, first articulated in 1599: context, through which the material conditions of the student's learning are considered, as well as the predispositions of the student; experience, through which students move beyond rote learning to something more active and personal; reflection, during which students apply the subject matter to their own lives and processes, and where meaning is said to be made in this paradigm; action, which involves change in students' attitudes and behaviors through the application of and reflection upon knowledge; and evaluation, through which students' mastery of subject matter is assessed with a view toward identifying gaps in students' knowledge, the need for alternate methods of teaching, and individualized approaches to encouraging and advising students.²

It is in this spirit of the *Ratio* that The University of Scranton's approach to assessment of student learning is designed. In particular, the same principles for evaluation of individual students can be applied to evaluation of groups of students who enrolled in various programs, including General Education.

Guiding Framework & Principles

In light of the new University Strategic Plan³, assessment efforts are connected to this framework for engaged, integrated, and global student learning experiences that assist students to achieve the Institutional Learning Outcomes:

1. Develop and use the intellectual and practical competencies that are the

¹ See: Duminuco, V. J. (Ed.) (2000). *The Jesuit Ratio Studiorum: 400th anniversary perspectives* (1st ed.). Fordham University Press: NY, NY.

² Witek, D. and Grettano, T. (2016). Revising for metaliteracy: Flexible course design to support social media pedagogy. In T. E. Jacobson and T. P. Mackey (Eds.), *Metaliteracy in practice* (pp. 1-22). Chicago, IL: Neal-Schuman. (Citation is on page 5)

³ "An Engaged, Integrated Global Student Experience." 2015. See: www.scranton.edu/strategicplan

foundation of personal and professional development and lifelong learning including oral and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning, and technological competency and information literacy.

2. Exhibit broad knowledge of the human condition, understanding the world in its physical and natural aspects, as well as the philosophical and theological basis for modern thought, faith and belief.
3. Demonstrate competence in their chosen field of study, using the knowledge and ability to address the most significant questions, and advancing towards positions of leadership.
4. Employ their knowledge and intellect to address situations in a way that demonstrates a devotion to the spiritual and corporal welfare of other human beings and by a special commitment to the pursuit of social justice and the common good of the entire human community.

This student learning assessment plan, alongside our overall planning and institutional effectiveness efforts, is guided by a set of guiding principles of best practice within each discipline:

- Planning and assessment are mission-driven, guided by our core educational values and the Ignatian educational paradigm, which guides Jesuit educational institutions to assess learners' growth in heart, mind, and spirit.
- Planning and assessment are integrated within appropriate advisory and decision-making processes and structures.
- Planning and assessment are iterative, adapting to changing needs and new opportunities.
- Planning and assessment are collaborative and participatory, engaging members of the University community in ways that are appropriate to members' roles and responsibilities.
- Planning and assessment are transparent. Their processes and outcomes are communicated clearly and frequently.
- Planning and assessment are evidence based. Quality data and evidence are

utilized to demonstrate how institutional and student learning outcomes are being met, and how results of assessments are used to inform planning and resourcing of programs and services.

- Planning and assessment are formative and summative, guiding and reflecting our performance over time.
- Planning and assessment are themselves assessed. Their processes are evaluated and refined through ongoing reflection and planned cycles of review.

The Office of Educational Assessment (OEA) coordinates campus-wide assessment of student learning outcomes. As a Faculty-led and driven office it serves the institution by developing faculty and staff expertise in methods of collection, analysis, and action so that curricular changes are driven by constructive attention to evidence. The OEA shares resources and expertise so that a larger repository of teaching and learning information can remain central to evidence-based decision-making about Jesuit educational excellence.

The OEA is comprised of a Director, a Director of General Education (GE) Assessment, and five Faculty Fellows representing each of the three colleges. Through an application and selection process, OEA Directors and Fellows are appointed from among the full-time faculty. The Assessment Advisory Committee (AAC), comprised of faculty, professional staff, and a student representative, advises the OEA. The Faculty Senate approves faculty appointments to the AAC. The OEA works collaboratively with other units that support the assessment of student learning and our approach to continuous improvement, including the offices of Planning & Institutional Effectiveness and Institutional Research.

Definition of Key Terms

Assessment Plan for Programs (APP): The plan for conducting program assessment over a three-year cycle.

Assessment Artifact: assignments, test questions, or other student work that can be assessed in aggregate to determine students' attainment of course, program, or institutional learning outcomes

Co-curricular: formal and informal experiences that foster student learning and development. Co-curricular activities are, typically, but not always, defined by their

separation from academic courses. These experiences complement the academic program and create connections between in and out of class learning.

Course-Level Assessment: the use of direct or indirect evidence to demonstrate that students are meeting the student learning outcomes for the course

Direct Assessment: collection and analysis of student work (i.e. assessment artifacts) to determine students' attainment of course, program, or institutional learning outcomes

High Impact Practices (HIPS): educational practices that have a significant impact on student success (Kuh, 2008). These can be academic or co-curricular and are characterized by collaborative, active learning with a reflection component. Some high impact practices at The University of Scranton are programs.

Indirect assessment: the use of surveys or other self-report evidence to determine students' attainment of course, program, or institutional learning outcomes

Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs): what we want graduates of The University of Scranton to know, do, or value at the completion of their academic program(s) and co-curricular experiences

Program: developed body of courses that receives transcript recognition

Program Assessment Report (PAR): documented submitted with the Annual Report summarizing the program's assessment of student learning.

Program-Level Assessment: the use of direct and indirect evidence to demonstrate that students are meeting the Program Learning Outcomes

Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs): what we want students to know, do, or value at the completion of an academic or co-curricular program

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs): what we want students to know, do, or value at the completion of an individual course or co-curricular experience

Procedures

Academic Programs

This plan requires that all academic programs conduct assessment at the program level on a three-year cycle (Appendix A, Figure 1). This means that programs will: a) identify and assess appropriate learning artifacts, which are embedded in courses whose SLOs most closely map to Program Learning Outcomes for the given cycle and/or b) identify and assess indirect evidence of PLOs.

These activities, however, do not preclude programs or individual faculty members from conducting assessment at the course level for their own interest, curriculum development, or to align with expectations of disciplinary (specialty) accreditation.

Academic departments and programs, including General Education (GE) will:

1. Ensure that SLOs for every course are communicated in course syllabi.
2. As a recommended best practice, ensure that, for every course, one or more SLOs aligns with a PLO
3. Post and maintain up-to-date PLOs on the program web page.
4. Develop and refine a plan to assess all PLOs on a three-year cycle. The plan should include both direct and indirect assessment evidence using the assessment plan template (see Appendix A, Figure 1).
5. *Appoint an Assessment Liaison, who reports to the Assistant Dean charged with assessment in each college. (under consideration).*
6. Analyze evidence collected from key assessments according to the plan.
7. Report and describe evidence of student achievement of PLOs, according to the established procedure in each college.
8. Describe how evidence is used to improve student learning and promote overall program improvement.

In order to meet these requirements, programs will collect and archive their own data, with the support of their academic Dean's office.

Timeline:

Every 3 years, programs in CAS (odd years) and PCPS (even years) will submit an Assessment Plan for Programs (APP) to their Dean's Office in October. The Dean's office will share copies of these plans with the OEA by November 1. KSOM will submit an assessment plan to OEA every 5 years, in accordance with its accreditation cycle.

Programs will complete items #6, and #7 by June 30th of every year as a component of Annual Reporting⁴, unless the program has undergone an external accreditation or program review during the academic year. Program review documents may serve as a PAR in the spring of the academic year in which program review took place. Accreditation reports may serve as a PAR in the spring before the scheduled site visit.

Programs will be responsible for reviewing and, if necessary, updating their PLOs and curriculum maps with every APP and Program Review⁵.

Academic Deans

Academic Deans will:

1. Archive assessment plans and reports for each academic program in his or her college/division.
2. Ensure and document that academic program assessment plans are reviewed and/or updated on a regular cycle, such as with Program Review (currently every 5 years) or in accordance with an accreditation cycle.

⁴ Every academic and administrative department submits and Annual Report every spring via the University's electronic Annual Report System. See: www.scranton.edu/planning for more information.

⁵ Each college maintains its own cycles for Program Review.

3. Document, disseminate and communicate assessment results throughout their respective colleges/division through committee and other meetings, annual assessment days/retreats, and other mechanisms.
4. With the input of College Curriculum and Assessment committees, which will review program assessment reports¹ in the College, describe and document direct and indirect evidence that students in the College are meeting one or more of the ILOs through academic programs and high impact practices.

Each academic dean leads discussions related to the use of assessment data for program improvement within their college with college-level Dean's Conferences and Curriculum and Assessment committees, which will review assessment evidence reported by programs, and identify and recommend to their Dean opportunities for improvement based upon those data.

On a cycle, Deans will provide a report by **March 1** to the Provost on college-wide assessment evidence, demonstrating the way in which attainment of PLOs in the college supports ILOs, and any programmatic changes or improvements made to address assessment results (see Appendix B, Figure 2).

Student Formation and Campus Life

As important partners in the student learning experience, departments within the Division of Student Formation & Campus Life will proceed in the following manner:

1. Departments will identify direct and indirect evidence that programs and services are assisting students in the achievement of one or more SLOs, which map to one or more ILOs.
2. Departments will articulate changes or improvements in programs or services based on assessment results.

Timeline:

Departments submit assessment reports to the Vice Provost for Student Formation and Campus Life via the Annual Report System each spring. Departments will report to the Director of Student Conduct & Assessment on July 1 of each Academic Year. The Vice Provost will report to the Provost on college-wide assessment evidence, demonstrating the way in which attainment of learning outcomes within SFLC

departments and programs supports ILOs, and any programmatic changes or improvements made to address assessment results.

Weinberg Memorial Library

The Library Faculty remain integral to student learning, especially regarding Library initiatives in assessment of Information Literacy.⁶ The Library's Information Literacy Program reflects the framework and the standards for information literacy developed by the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL).

1. Library Faculty will identify direct and indirect evidence that information literacy classes and reference transactions assist students in the achievement of one or more outcomes, which map to one of more GE competencies and to ILOs. These are further developed and articulated by faculty in the academic departments who apply for Information Literacy Stipends to collaborate with Library Faculty to incorporate information literacy into their courses.⁷
2. Library Faculty will articulate changes or improvements in the methods used in instruction based on assessment results.

Timeline:

The Library conducts Information Literacy Program assessment on a 3 year cycle. Faculty submit assessment reports to the Dean of the Library each spring, which are then posted on the Library's Web site.

Center for Teaching and Learning Excellence

The Center for Teaching & Learning Excellence (CTLE) will continue to provide a comprehensive resource center to support teaching and learning. The CTLE strengthens student learning via tutoring, reading services, and the Writing Center. The tutoring program is used by approximately a quarter of the undergraduate student population, with more than a third of the incoming new students availing themselves of the tutoring offers.

⁶ For the Library's long-standing assessment of Information Literacy, including their present plan, see: <http://www.scranton.edu/academics/wml/infolit/assessment.shtml>

⁷ This assessment is reflected in the final reports of those faculty who have received Information Literacy Stipends, see: <http://www.scranton.edu/academics/wml/infolit/stipends/index.shtml>

1. The CTLE will continue to collect indirect evidence of student academic achievement as a result of participation in the tutoring program, based on student disclosure via surveys.
2. The CTLE will use the results for continued improvement of the services, with significant cooperation and feedback from faculty liaisons from several academic departments.
3. The CTLE conducts program assessment of its student services every semester via student surveys.

Planning and Institutional Research

The Planning & Institutional Effectiveness and Institutional Research (IR) offices regularly work with administrative departments on provision of data for Annual Reports and other reporting needs.

Specifically, the Office of Institutional Research will assist in student learning assessment in the following ways:

1. Archive information on surveys currently in use across the University that capture indirect evidence of academic and co-curricular student learning.
2. Administer key surveys (e.g. NSSE, FSSE)
3. Consult with Academic Programs, Colleges, and Student Formation & Campus Life for the purpose of identifying and supplying evidence for indirect assessment.

Timeline:

Administration, provision, and archiving of data from national student surveys and other indirect measure of assessment, will occur on a cycle determined by the survey administration dates.

Consultation with departments will occur on an ad hoc basis (*unless this discussion can be combined into OEA consultations with academic and student service department*).

Office of Educational Assessment

Through the Associate Provost for Institutional Effectiveness, who oversees the Assessment portion of the Annual Report, the OEA will review evidence of educational effectiveness in academic and co-curricular programs, including General Education.

The OEA will:

1. Ensure that PLOs map to ILOs and that SLOs map to PLOs in a coherent and parsimonious manner.
2. Develop and oversee templates, reporting tools, and data management platforms for collecting, analyzing and reporting evidence of student learning.
3. Review assessment evidence submitted to the Provost by Deans and others by way of the Annual Reporting System according to the proposed cycle outline.
4. Make recommendations for improvements to program assessment processes.
5. Identify areas for faculty and staff development with regard to assessment of student learning; plan, implement, and evaluate resources and programs for faculty and staff development.
6. Host an annual Intersession Assessment Institute for broad discussion of the use of assessment results to monitor and improve academic and co-curricular programs, including GE, and to ensure that the University can demonstrate evidence that its students and graduates are meeting the ILOs (see Appendix B, Figure 2).
7. Report evidence of student achievement of PLOs and ILOs, as well as the use of evidence for academic programs and co-curricular offerings to the following entities:
 - i. AAC and Faculty Senate
 - ii. The Office of Planning & Institutional Effectiveness for communication to the Board of Trustees, MSCHE, and other stakeholders.

8. Develop and communicate information related to best practices in student learning assessment, communicating these to the University community via means that include the OEA web site, www.scranton.edu/assessment
9. Coordinate specific duties related to the assessment of the General Education Program, as described below.

General Education Assessment

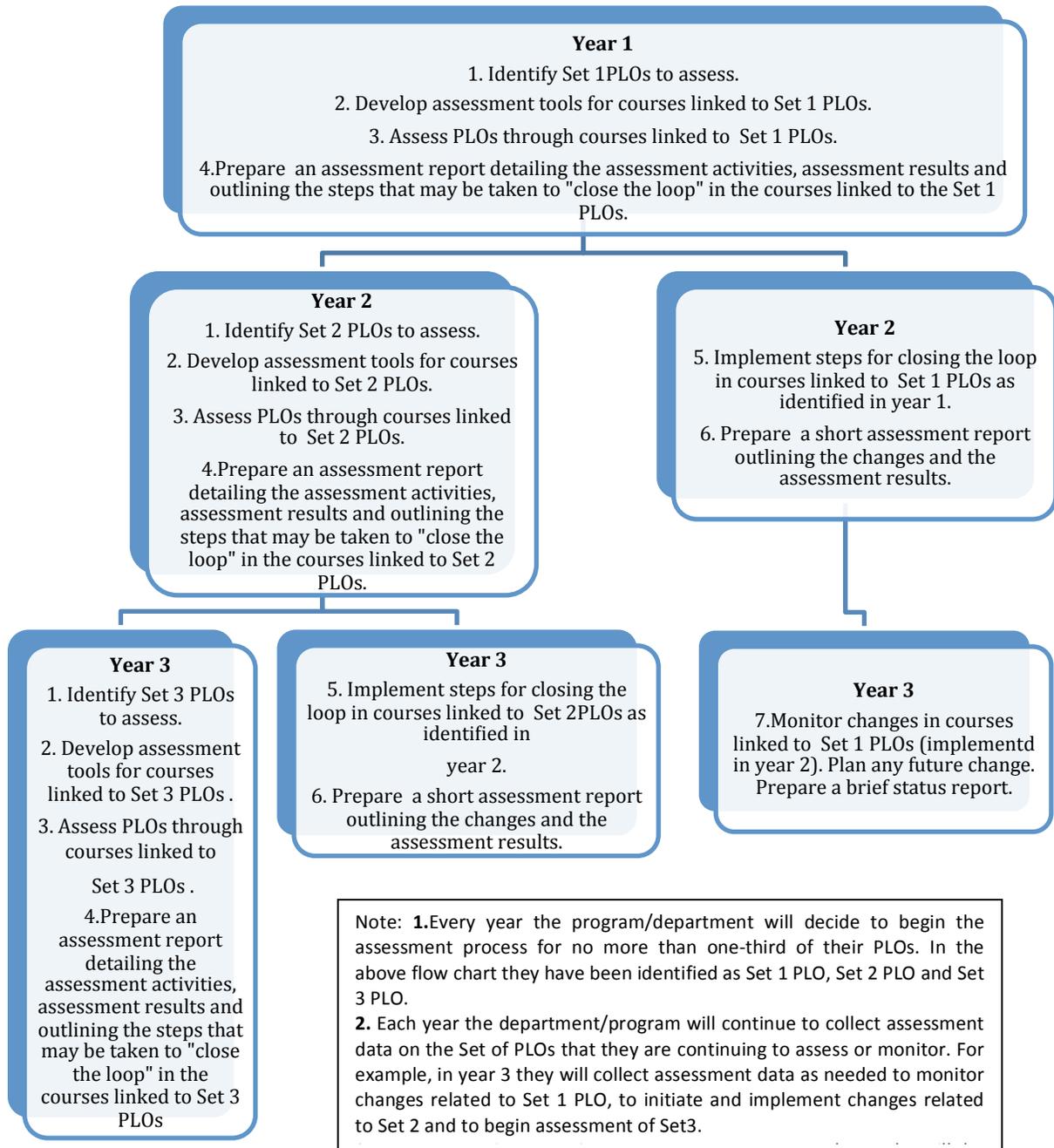
1. Under the leadership of the Director of General Education Assessment, the OEA will institute a regular GE assessment cycle.
2. Identify subset of PLOs to be assessed on a rotating cycle (see Appendix C, Figure 1).
3. Coordinate GE assessment cycle according to subsets of curricular designations, and utilize appropriate means and measures for elected competencies.
4. Analyze & disseminate material collected from previous year.
5. Collaborate review of findings, make recommendations, and enact necessary curricular changes from each subset according to the cycle calendar.
6. Provide an annual report to the Provost demonstrating how evidence is used to improve student learning and promote overall program improvement.
7. Promote best practices in GE assessment through information sharing, the annual Intersession Institute, and summer workshops.
8. Publish on the web assessment activities.

In support of all of these efforts, the [Assessment Advisory Committee \(AAC\)](#) will:

1. Advise the Director of the OEA on the impact and effectiveness of OEA processes.
2. Serve as a liaison between the OEA and Faculty Senate.
3. Link evidence of student learning assessment to institutional assessment efforts to ensure attainment of strategic goals.
4. Advise the Director of Institutional Research on the selection and use of instruments that provide indirect evidence of student learning.

Appendix A

Figure 1: Cycle for Program Assessment



Appendix B

Figure 1: Cycle for Academic Deans

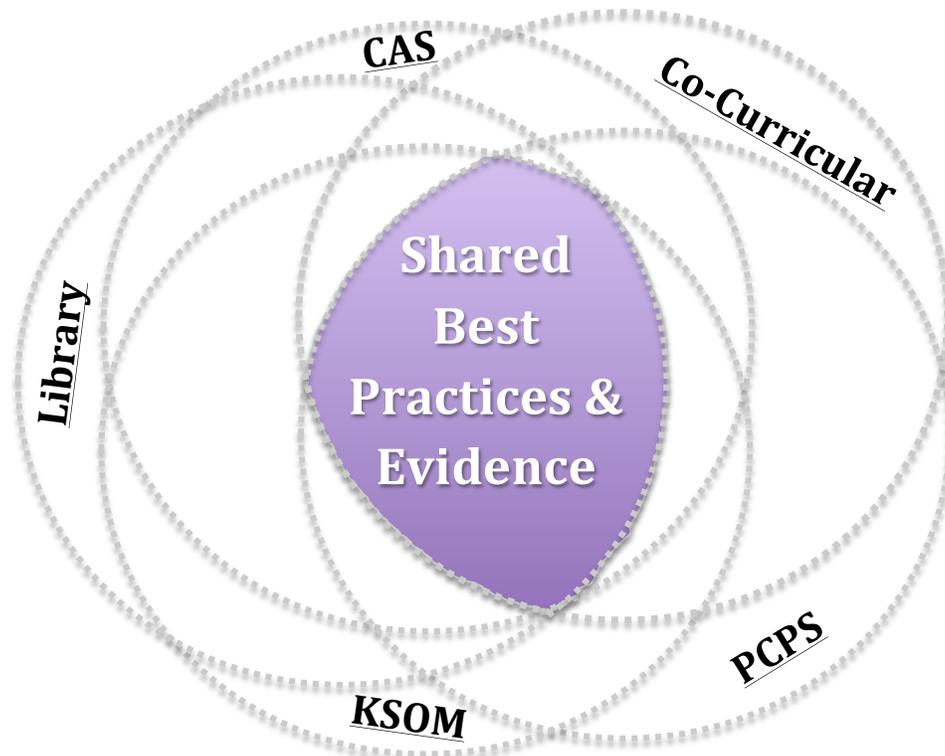
KSOM	Spring, 2016	Fall, 2017
PCPS	Fall, 2016	Spring, 2018
CAS/Library	Spring, 2017	Fall, 2018

Figure 2: Cycle for Intercollegiate Collaboration

Each January, the University divisions will share best practices and examples of assessment evidence used in programmatic and/or course improvements. Two or more representatives from each division (CAS, Library, Co-Curricular, KSOM, & PCPS) should be present to ensure collaboration. **At least one shared example from each division must be related to GE Attributes.**

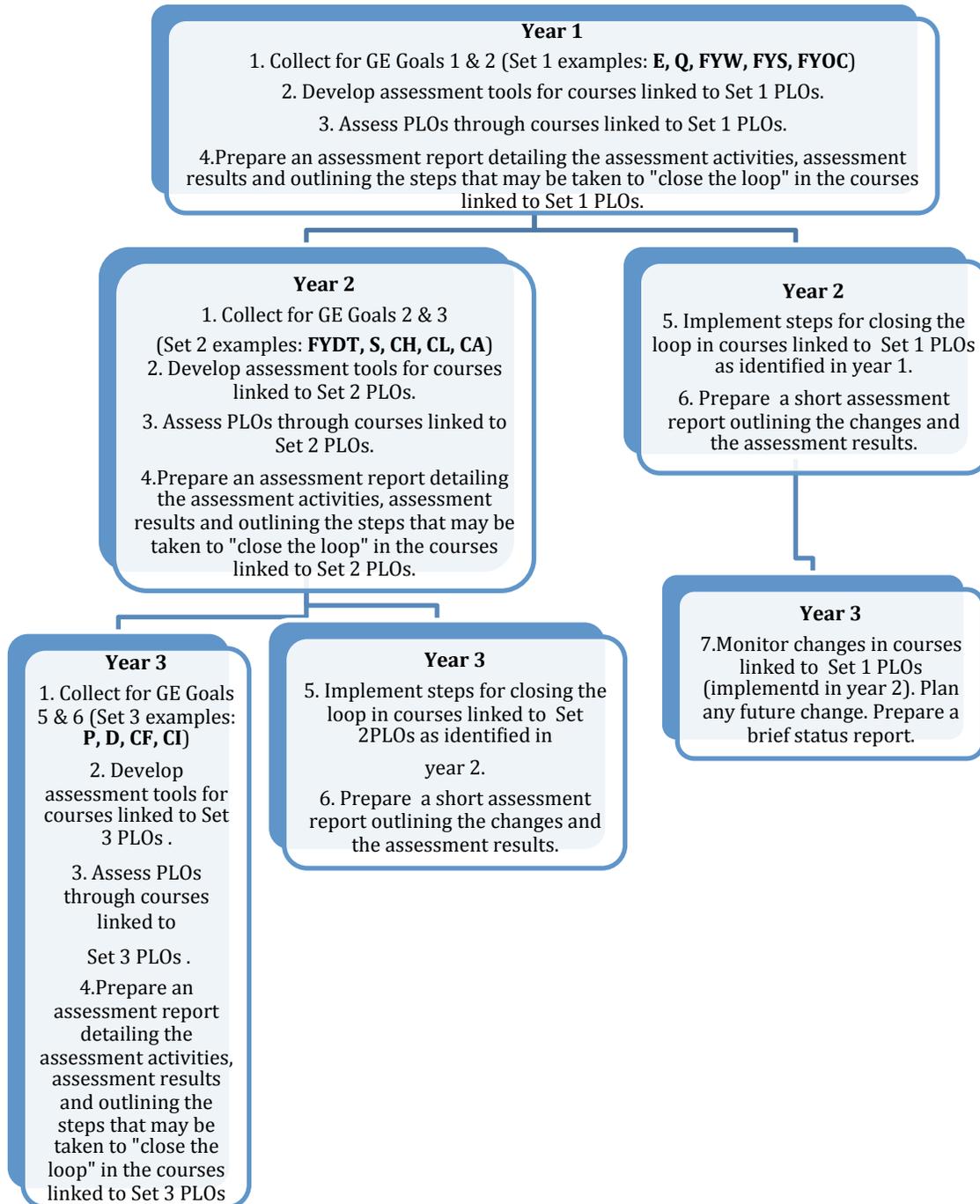
<u>Division</u>	<u>Representatives</u>	
CAS	2	} Shared Best Practices & Evidence
PCPS	2	
KSOM	2	
Library	2	
Co-Curricular	2	

UNIVERSITY MODEL FOR COLLABORATION



Appendix C

Figure 1: Cycle for General Education Assessment



Appendix D: General Education Assessment Committee Charge and Membership

General Education Program Assessment Committee

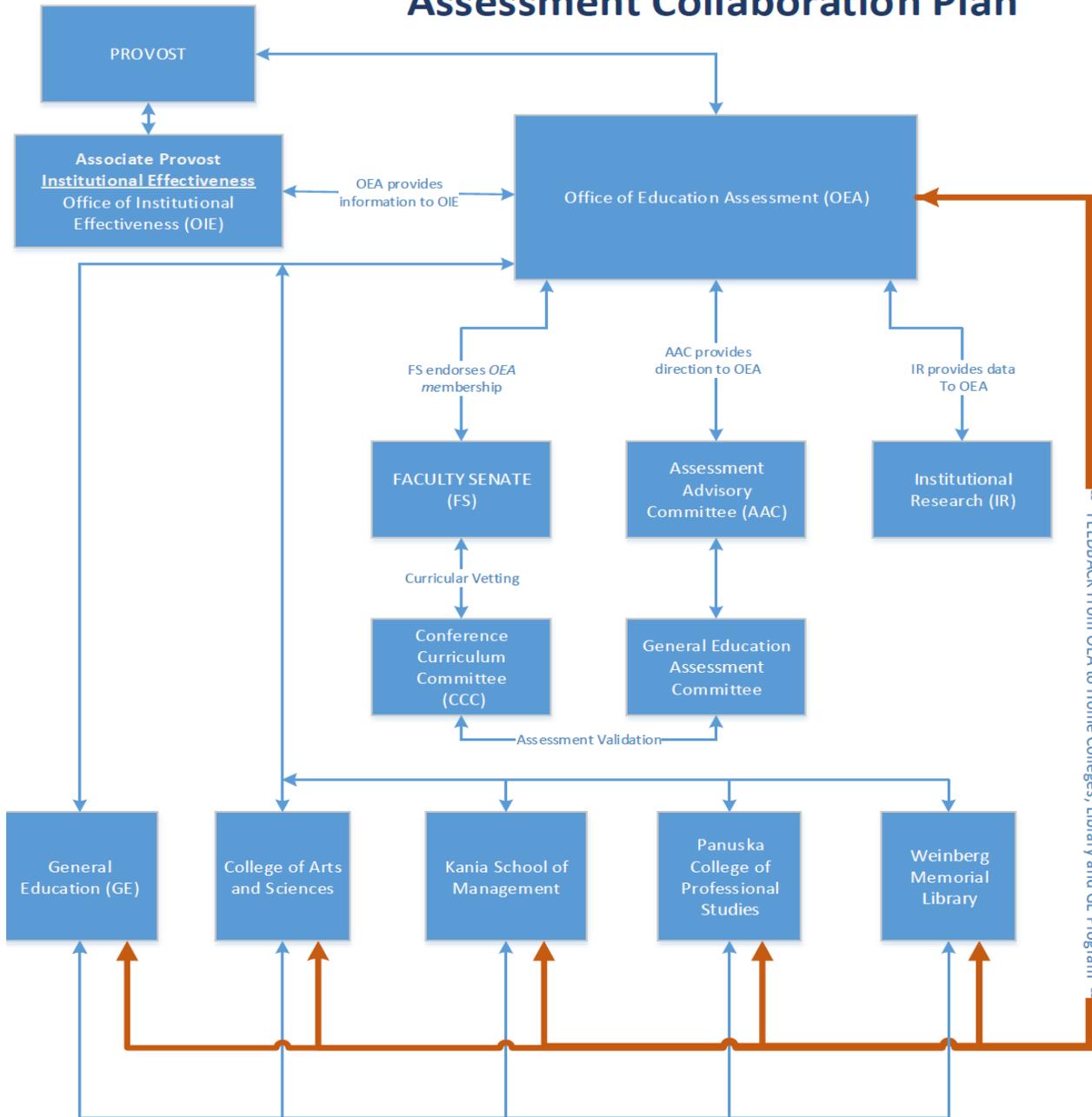
The General Education Program Assessment (GEPA) Subcommittee is an advisory group supporting the Office of Educational Assessment (OEA) in its pursuit of enhancing student learning at the University of Scranton. The GEPA collaborates with the Director of General Education Assessment to develop, implement, and maintain assessment processes. Faculty and Staff members are approved by the Faculty Senate.

Following St. Ignatius of Loyola's directive to "find God in all things," the University of Scranton understands General Education (GE) to be the foundation for the spiritual development and character formation of its students. Founded on Catholic and Jesuit principles of liberal education, the curriculum aims to integrate the intellectual, spiritual and moral aspects of learning to provide our students with a transformational experience that will aid them in rising to the challenge of engaging in the service of faith and the promotion of justice. Membership ensures common ownership and shared governance of the GE curriculum.

General Education is increasingly viewed as a set of competencies developed over time, from the earliest first year student experience to the graduating senior, as focuses on what students should *know, do, and value* upon completion of a program of study.

Appendix E: Assessment Communications Flow Chart

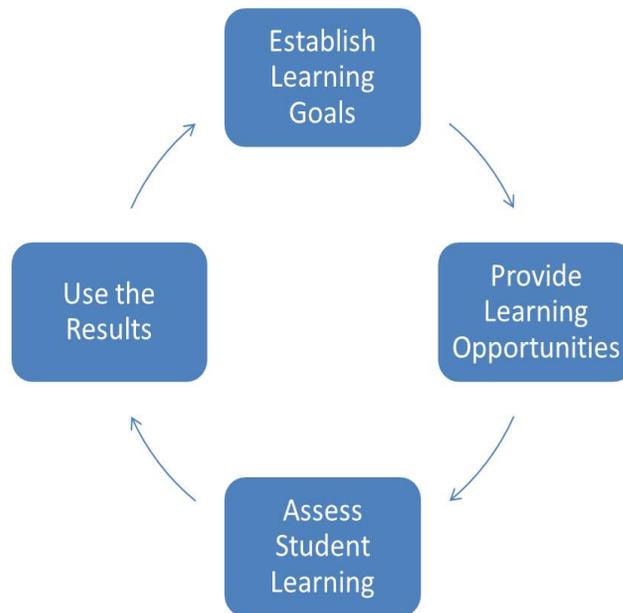
Assessment Collaboration Plan



Appendix F: Assessment Brief

Assessment Brief: A Guide for Using Results for Program Improvement

Student learning assessment is all about determining essential student learning outcomes – what we want students to know, or be able to do as a result of their learning – and how well they are meeting those goals. To help illustrate this process, visuals such as the one below are commonly used:



The fourth phase of assessment planning – using results - is often referred to as “closing the loop.” Taking the time to review, discuss, and reflect on assessment results is an important part of supporting continuous improvement in our programs. To facilitate this process, it is essential to share assessment findings amongst faculty, as well as others involved in academic leadership – department chairs, college curriculum and assessment committees, deans, and governance groups.

Sample questions to guide the review of assessment results:

- Do the results suggest the need to pay more particular attention to the predisposition and life experiences of the learner? What changes might be made? How and when will they be made? How and when will the effects of these changes be assessed?

- What did the assessment results indicate about the level of achievement of the student learning outcomes?
- Do the results suggest areas where improvements or changes should be made within the program, its curriculum, or its courses?

The University of Scranton applies the Ignatian approach of learning to educational assessment. The approach provides a framework for student learning assessment through five focal activities: **context**, **experience**, **reflection**, **action**, and **evaluation**.⁸ The core mission and identity of the University are clearly tied to our assessment practices as they apply to the “development of the person.”⁹

⁸ See Korth, S.J. (2008). *Precis of Ignatian pedagogy: a practical approach*. In. G.W. Traub (Ed.), *A Jesuit education reader*. Chicago, IL: Loyola Press.

⁹ Dumunico, V.J. (Ed.) (2000). *The Jesuit ratio studiorum: 400th anniversary perspectives*. New York, NY: Fordham University Press.