

Carrie Nepstad's Statement on Program Assessment
Sent with Phillip Vargas to Faculty Council Meeting in 2/2016

Unit Assessment, as we have defined it, is assessment that focuses on any unit of study beyond a single course. This ranges from the largest unit which is general education outcomes to smaller units such as a series of courses or multiple sections of one course. Program level outcomes are just another unit of study to consider. We define a program as any unit of study that ends with a certificate or degree.

The question to ask when beginning to design an assessment program for any unit of study is "what should the student be able to do by the end of this unit?" So, with Program Student Learning Outcomes or P-SLOs we ask what a student should be able to do by the end of the program.

Historically, since 2013, the HWC Assessment Committee has focused primarily on SLOs for general education. In recent years, in addition to general education the AC has developed a program that focuses on unit level assessment within the departments. The units of focus vary from department to department depending on what faculty in each department were been most interested in exploring. Now, in addition to the other units, HWC is preparing to focus on program level assessment. This is a natural extension of what the AC already does so when it became clear that this was going to be a necessary element of the HLC self-study, the AC spent time discussing how to support this process. Right now, we envision that it will be quite similar to the unit level liaison work but it will be in addition to the projects currently in progress. We are not changing the unit level work but we are expanding our support for folks to be able to focus at the program level.

A couple of years ago, Margie worked with a small group of faculty on a Special Initiatives project - the goal for that work was to focus on assessment of student learning at the program level. Participants created curriculum maps for their programs and during the second iteration of the project they focused on a capstone where program level outcomes would be assessed. I imagine the new version of Program level outcomes project will either continue this work or revamp it as faculty see fit.