

## **Frequently Asked Questions about Assessing the New Core Curriculum**

### ***Why is it necessary to assess the core curriculum at USD?***

In order to ensure students are meeting our expectations for learning in core classes, we will need to collect and assess data. Based on our findings, we will be able to demonstrate achievement levels and make recommendations for any needed improvements in the curriculum. Additionally, USD is required to demonstrate student learning and report to our accrediting body, WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC).

### ***Do we only do assessment to satisfy WASC (WSCUC = WASC)?***

No. Effective assessment practices and analyses of those practices will provide valuable information about student learning. The conclusions reached through outcome assessment inform curricular decisions and will lead to improvements in learning over time. Assessment data can also provide support for resource requests related to the core curriculum.

### ***If we vote not to accept the revised core, will assessment go away?***

No. We are required to assess the core curriculum. The WSCUC (WASC) Visiting Team and Commission made it clear that our current core is not assessable; we were expected to construct and implement a version that is. If we do not pass this proposal, we would still be required to work on core revision until we have a version that is assessable. Additionally, failure to pass this core will undoubtedly trigger a special visit, a serious consequence, before our next accreditation self-study begins in 2021.

### ***How will the core be assessed?***

Assessment of the core curriculum will occur in two ways: 1) through the process of program review, and linked to this process, 2) through the cyclical assessment of specific core learning outcomes. Program review will occur once every seven years according to USD's Academic Program Review guidelines. As part of the general review process, assessments of core outcome subsets will occur annually.

### ***What is my role as a faculty member in terms of assessing the core learning outcomes?***

The cycle for assessing core outcomes will be publicly posted so that all faculty who teach courses in which core outcomes are embedded will be notified well in advance when those outcomes are to be assessed. Individual faculty members will be asked to identify and make available for selection and coding student work from assignments or exams that include the assessment criteria as outlined by the Area Task Force reports.

***Will assessment be used to evaluate my individual performance as a faculty member?***

No. Core assessment will report on aggregate student achievement in relation to core learning outcomes and at no time will student work be tied to either the individual courses or the individual faculty members who teach the courses.

***Will assessment to be used to evaluate individual student performance or impact their grades?***

No. All student work is coded so that at no time will faculty assessors be able to identify the students whose work is under evaluation, the classes from which the students come, or the faculty who teach the classes. Assessment data will only be used to report on student achievement of learning outcomes as outlined in the Area Task Force reports and will be presented as aggregate data (not by course, faculty, or individual student). Assessment analysis will have no effect on student grades; many assessments occur after courses have concluded and grades have already been submitted.

***How does assessment relate to individual courses?***

A sample of student work is selected from across multiple courses for assessment; no one class is ever assessed in its entirety. If the level of outcome achievement were less than desirable, faculty who teach in that core area would work together to devise collectively methods for making improvements.

***How often will each core area be assessed and when will core assessment begin?***

A timetable will be created during summer 2016. Assessment will begin once the new core requirements are applied to incoming students.

***What will assessment reports include?***

Assessment reports will include an analysis of the selected outcomes, evaluation criteria, results, and recommendations. Assessment data will identify levels of student outcome achievement reported in aggregate.

***Where will assessment reports go?***

Assessment reports will be distributed to the Core Curriculum Committee, which reports to the faculty assemblies in the College and Schools of Business and Engineering. Reports will also be part of the evidence that is provided to WSCUC (WASC).

***Who will be responsible for assessment?***

The Provost office will lead the assessment effort and work with the Core Curriculum Committee to select faculty to form core assessment teams.