

CASL Newsletter – Spring 2023



On-demand Support

CASL and the Office of Academic Affairs provide on-demand resources through the [Assessment website](#). Key among those resources are the Academic Program Assessment Guidebook and the ability to [book an appointment](#) with Tracey Frey, Assistant Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness and Academic Assessment.

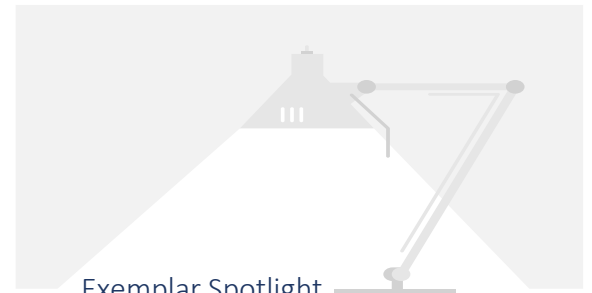
Assessment Support Sessions for Assessment Coordinators & Report Authors

By popular demand, CASL is bringing back assessment support sessions in April, May, and June. Be on the lookout for announcements in LoyolaToday and in your inbox! Please consider bringing incoming assessment coordinators with you if responsibilities will change next year.

Highlighting Good Assessment

CASL looks for key elements of strong assessment practice:

- Clear learning outcome statements that are aligned with precision to the Undergraduate Learning Aims or Graduate Learning Goals of the University
- The use of multiple measures, including at least one of direct evidence of student work, for each learning outcome
- The use of rubrics or other demonstration of a shared understanding among program faculty for the criteria used to assess student work
- Defined targets for student success, and the use of assessment results to inform actions for continuous improvement



Exemplar Spotlight

Biology program 2021-22 assessment report for:

- ✓ meaningful artifacts aligned to the outcome statement,
- ✓ clear connections between the results and the findings/analysis, and
- ✓ clear connections to their Actions for continuous improvement.

Stay tuned for other spotlights in the future!

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CHAIR'S CORNER

Thank you for your continued support in building and sustaining a culture of assessment at Loyola. It is a critical part of fulfilling our core values, specifically *Academic Excellence* and *The Constant Challenge to Improve*. Your programs' commitment to continuous improvement of student learning and annual reports allows your department, the deans' offices, the full Loyola community, and external stakeholders to understand the quality of a Loyola University Maryland education.

If your department will transition to new assessment leaders next year, please let us know this spring who they will be. You can do so by emailing Tracey Frey at tdfrey@loyola.edu.

Deadlines: Assessment Reports due by **6/8**; please append them to your Departmental Reports to the Dean (as applicable to your school). In the fall, the 2023-24 Assessment Plans will be due to Tracey by **9/30**.

ASSOCIATE/ASSISTANT DEAN'S CORNER

Associate/Assistant Deans' Reports to CASL and the meta-analysis rubrics are **due by July 8th**.

Be on the lookout in your inbox for the 2023 templates.

Thank you!

What's New in Assessment at Loyola?

To fulfill Loyola's responsibilities to assess the Core Curriculum, the committee for the assessment of student learning (CASL) is building the necessary resources for a future systematic, organized, and regular assessment of the Core Curriculum, as expected by Middle States and MHEC.

Chairs of the departments that teach in the Core Curriculum are refining a "Core Curriculum Map" to the *Assessable Learning Outcomes* this spring. They will complete their review by **March 31st**. Additionally, CASL has created draft rubrics that align to the Senate-approved *Assessable Learning Outcomes*. This spring, 10 faculty members from disciplines that teach in the Core Curriculum are testing three of the draft rubrics and providing feedback by **May 3rd**. CASL will report out to the UCC and the Senate next fall with the results of these efforts and will test more rubrics with faculty members' help next year.

Annual Assessment Process Deadlines



Gardening & Assessment

By Tim Clark, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Mathematics and Statistics & CASL Faculty Co-chair

It's March, so the forsythia shrub that I've been pruning and caring for yearly is beginning to bud in the yard. When we first moved into the house, it was a flurry of branches that grew in every direction, taking up an outsized amount of space. This winter, I've appreciated the dormant plant for what it has become over ten years' time and attention. It is a vigorously flowering, pleasantly shaped, healthy member of our home which, last year, required less maintenance over the growing season.

I think of the last five years of unprecedented growth in assessment at Loyola in a similar way. Dedicated work from faculty and administrators have focused our attention on the process and benefits of assessment. Each graduate and undergraduate program has examined and mapped their learning aims to those at the university level. We established the framework for assessment of the undergraduate core curriculum and are assembling the cycle for administering and evaluating that assessment. Diligent, caring faculty assessed the Diversity Course Requirement last year and, like others across the University, are reflecting on and discerning the results with an eye on closing the loop. The university-wide adoption of Watermark for digital reporting of assessment practice and results is nearly complete, and university-level aggregated reporting on student learning has begun. The compounding gains from these changes will continue to be realized in the coming years as adoption and practice begin to positively affect one another on the path towards continuous improvement. With increased faculty attention to high impact practices in the classroom, I am hopeful for the future of student learning at Loyola and have confidence in the assessment structures in place to demonstrate learning across the University. These structural changes have resulted in a healthy, fertile soil for assessment at Loyola.

Last year, my backyard vegetable garden was full of surprises; cucumbers flourished for the first time,

herbs took hold and spread, peppers popped and reddened as the summer progressed. Sadly, our favorite planting – tomato varieties both large and small – languished all season. The plants grew more slowly than in recent years and produced little to no ripe fruit, leaving us without our usual late summer snacks and salads. Was it a sign of changing soil health? A result of mild weather in early summer? The new timer system we set up for watering? The mind reels as the variables confound. As spring begins, the joys and challenges of backyard gardening are set to start anew, as is the search for answers to our botanical questions.

In assessment conversations with faculty across the University, similar themes arise. How should we interpret the results of a recent assessment? How does the wording of assessment questions impact student responses? How do introductory courses in a discipline motivate students toward deeper learning in these areas? Which topics in a course are best suited for collection of artifacts? What learning is and is not captured by our rubrics? What parts of our assessment process are working well, and which require our attention? How does student learning continue to be impacted by the pandemic?...

This snowstorm of questions can be overwhelming, and personally, prompts me to simplify. This year, in my garden boxes, I will mix the soil more thoroughly, lay down paper barriers to protect from weed takeovers, and measure distances between plantings more precisely. In our department, we are closing the loop by identifying ways to coordinate more of our introductory courses so accuracy in student calculation can be addressed systematically. We are assessing programming skills in certain courses for the first time and bringing more faculty into the assessment process. These attainable goals help us focus on the short term, while sowing seeds for future questions and areas of growth.

Keep digging, planting, and harvesting, everyone! The ground is set for an increasingly diverse bloom of interesting assessment of student learning at Loyola. We have much to be proud of and much work to do, so roll up your sleeves and I'll see you in the garden.