



October 24, 2025

To: Dr. Diane Anderson, Vice President for Student Affairs
Dr. Chris Cheatham, Interim Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs and Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, Budget and Operations
Dr. Candy McCorkle-Boughton, Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion

From: Lenore Yaeger, Chair – University Assessment Steering Committee (UASC)

Re: UASC Annual Report for 2024-25

On behalf of the University Assessment Steering Committee, I share a summary of our work throughout the 2024-25 academic year. Details of each activity can be found in the corresponding sections below.

- Annual planning retreat and strategic actions
- Continuing collaborative leadership for 2024-25
- Higher Learning Commission 4-Year Assurance Review – Criterion 4.B response
- Assessment Toolkit – continuing development
- Measures of Success Series
- Highlighting assessment efforts across campus
- Assessment Mini Grant Program awards 4 grants totaling \$8,700
- Breaking down siloes and learning from one another
- AI and assessment possibilities
- Additional Subcommittees

Annual planning retreat and strategic actions

The UASC continues to follow the five-year strategic plan created in 2021. We started off the year with an annual retreat to discuss and identify the strategic priorities and action items that we would like to focus on in Academic Year 2024-25. Below is a list of our key accomplishments, based on those action items.

Collaborative leadership for 2024-25

The Executive Team, which provides leadership, direction and scope for the work of the UASC, consists of the chair and Division of Student Affairs, (Lenore Yaeger), vice chair (Steve Sparks), past chair (Veronica Rice McCray), Office of Institutional Effectiveness (Karen Stokes Chapo), administrative support from the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (Tonya Dean), the Office of Diversity & Inclusion (Danyelle Gregory), and WMU Essential Studies (Randy Ott).

There has not been an election for the 25-26 vice-chair position; no member with an interest had the capacity for the position at this time. Given that the UASC is already planning on reviewing and renewing our strategic plan in the current year and that the leadership model has become more collaborative, we made the decision to start the new year without a vice chair. Part of the work of the committee this year will be to decide on a leadership structure and commence canvassing for a 26-27 AY chair if necessary, after a structure has been decided.

Higher Learning Commission (HLC) 4-Year Assurance Review – Criterion 4.B. Response

WMU participated in the HLC 4-Year Assurance Review process over the 2024-25 academic year. A narrative report was written to describe how our institution meets the 5 Criterion that the HLC require meeting for affirmation of accreditation, and documentation/evidence was shared as well to support those claims.

Criterion 4.B is focused on student learning outcomes assessment:

The institution engages in ongoing assessment of student learning as part of its commitment to the educational outcomes of its students.

1. The institution has effective processes for assessment of student learning and for achievement of learning goals in academic and cocurricular offerings.
2. The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.
3. The institution's processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including the substantial participation of faculty, instructional and other relevant staff members.

Within the narrative, we described WMU's assessment processes, provided numerous examples of how assessment results are used for improving learning, and incorporated information about those who participate. The Higher Learning Commission response to our report was that the criterion was met with no interim monitoring. In particular, they noted that:

"Multiple, impactful examples of improvements made based on assessment were provided in the assurance argument. It is clear that WMU engages in ongoing assessment grounded in best practice and utilizes the data it gathers to make improvements in its curriculum and co-curricular activities to better the learning of its students."

We realize that this outcome reflects the work of our amazing colleagues from across the institution, and we applaud and celebrate what they do and continue to do to assure that our students can be successful in every way. But it is our hope that through the work of the UASC we were a catalyst for this successful outcome, through our promotion of the importance of participating in assessment planning, modeling best practices, sharing new ideas, all with the intent to help shape a university-wide culture of continuous improvement.

Assessment Toolkit – continuing development

We continue to update the online [Assessment Toolkit](#) to add new resources. We've finished building out the initial draft of an assessment glossary, to include references to the newly created Experience-Driven Learning definition. We continue to develop the glossary of assessment terminology so that we all have the same point of reference on certain key terms about assessment. We intend for the glossary to provide information about terms and ideas that will nurture new approaches to assessment planning and implementation, especially referencing ones that may be unique to Western. We've also added in many new resources focused on the University Libraries Data Services and Resources offerings. The Toolkit continues to be an ongoing project with revisions completed as necessary to keep the resource updated and current.

Measures of Success Series

We continue to provide professional development opportunities for our campus community around assessment-related topics through the Measures of Success Series.

Sessions held in March 2025 focused on experience-driven learning , with a keynote shared by [Dr. Jay Roberts](#), called “[Practical Tools to Assess and Strengthen Experiential Learning Inside and Outside the Classroom](#)”. Dr. Roberts, who is the Provost and Dean of Warren Wilson College, focused his keynote on sharing research-backed insights on the impact that experiential learning can make, common pitfalls to watch out for, and practical strategies to strengthen experiential learning in any venue (course, programs, and institution-wide).

We also held a panel discussion consisting of 3 faculty members who received the 2024 Experience-Driven Venture Grants, Jacklyn Brickman, Ashlyn Kuersten, Luchara Wallace, and 3 of their students Kailyn Howe, Jordan Johnson, Lisa Trapp, respectively, who participated in the learning experiences. The faculty panelists shared ideas about how to set meaningful goals, track progress, and measure success in these real-world learning experiences, with the intent to help attendees brainstorm how they might incorporate experience-driven learning into their courses/programs. The student panelists shared their perspectives, giving insightful testimonies and key takeaways from participating in these types of learning experiences.

We offered an in-person reception entitled, “Mini-Grants and Mini-Bites: A Celebration of Assessment!”, held to uplift and highlight the projects of the 2024 Assessment Mini Grant recipients, as well as all of the recipients from over 20 years of assessment grant projects. The grants have been offered to provide WMU colleagues with seed money to advance the work of assessment and continuous improvement efforts. Since 2003, there have been over 170 participants who worked on 118 different assessment-related projects that were awarded over \$342,000. We had a lot to celebrate!

We continue to invite higher education institutions in the State of Michigan and beyond to participate in the offerings in order to build and facilitate potential collaboration with colleagues interested in assessment. There were **57** attendees ***representing WMU and the University of Connecticut***. Attendees consisted of faculty, staff, administrators, part-time instructors, and graduate students. Attendance was lower than in previous years. The planning committee intends to work with WMUx and the Office of Faculty Development to rethink how we offer and make announcements about the events to try to garner more participation in the upcoming 2025-26 academic year. The planning committee is also looking at bringing back the ‘Teaching and Learning Bash’ in fall 2026, an event similar to Bronco Bash with a focus on instructors and staff, with planning for that starting in fall 2025.

Highlighting assessment efforts across campus

A subcommittee continues to work on curating assessment stories for the purpose of sharing ideas and promoting the great assessment work happening around campus. The group is continuing to work on this during the 2025-26 academic year to invite several of the 2025 Assessment Mini Grant recipients to share about their projects. The subcommittee plans to record interviews that will be shared in numerous ways including the web, newsletters, and more, with the intent to help spread the word about the potential of the mini grant program, share examples for how one might approach assessment in different areas/units/programs, and highlight the excellent work being done across campus focusing on continuous improvement of student learning.

Assessment Mini Grant Program

Each year, the UASC provides funding for outcomes assessment-related projects for colleagues in both academic and co-curricular areas through the Assessment Mini Grant Program.

The purpose of the program is to support continuous improvement efforts through assessment of learning and operational outcomes, to help stimulate interest in assessment research, and to promote student success initiatives. The grants are meant to help build capacity around assessment-related practices and provide a means for our colleagues to advance and mature assessment efforts.

The UASC awarded **four assessment mini grants** in 2025 (with a maximum award of \$2,200) **for a total of \$8,700** to:

- Matthew Bracey and Adrienne Fraaza (TRiO, Merze Tate College and WMUx)
- Dale Brown and McGwire Hidden (University Center for the Humanities)
- Yvonne Jackson (Physical Therapy)
- Lenore Yaeger (Assessment, Marketing and Communications, DOSA)

Grant recipients will share a summary and the product/results of the projects via final reports submitted in January 2026. They will also participate in the 2026 Measures of Success Series to share more about their ongoing project work.

Breaking down siloes and learning from one another

The UASC members expressed interest in learning about the work of colleagues across campus with a particular focus on how outcomes assessment is incorporated into and gives insight into continuous improvement efforts. We invited colleagues to our monthly meetings to share about their work, and included time for discussion and Q & A. Below is a list of the presenters and the areas they focused their presentations around:

- Donielle Easlick – Program Manager of Montgomery Essential Needs; Essential Needs, overview of what they provide, and how they help our students, and how data was used to improve offerings and services.
- Danyelle Gregory – Associate VP Diversity/Inclusion; Campus Climate Survey, key results and findings.
- Evan Heiser – Senior Director of Career and Experiential Education; Career services overview, background, educational resources and services, and how data has been used for improvement.
- Michele Behr – Professor, University Libraries; Open Educational Resources (OER), what are they, how they can impact our students, and the OER grants.
- Gwen Tarbox – Director, Faculty Development (WMUx); AI at WMU, presentations, resources, where to learn more and keep up-to-date on this ever-changing topic.
- Cadence Warr – Coordinator, Data Collection, College of Aviation (CoA); Aviation Accreditation Board International (AABI) and accreditation, overview of the standards, and how CoA views and approaches assessment and continuous improvement efforts.
- Adriana Cardoso Reyes – Associate Director of Institutional Accreditation and Planning, Office of Institutional Effectiveness; [Excelencia in Education Project](#)/Latino Student Success, overview of designation and project, WMU's application, potential data exploration used for the application process, and how it could translate to all student groups, potentially providing us with valuable information to use for continuous improvement efforts with all of our students.

- David Paul – Chair and Master Faculty Specialist, Department of Philosophy; AI courses at WMU and AI discussion, ethics, considerations, resources etc.

AI and assessment possibilities

The UASC members expressed strong interest in AI, including the desire to learn how it can be utilized both in and outside of the classroom by and for students, and in particular how it may be utilized for assessment purposes in our work. We discussed this topic several times throughout the academic year, including through the conversations with our invited guests, Gwen Tarbox and David Paul. We looked at several resources, including the work of [Leon Furze](#), who has written extensively on AI, teaching learning and assessment. We intend to continue our exploration and learning around how AI could be utilized to simplify assessment planning efforts, with the intent of making more time for using what is learned from assessments for continuous improvement.

Additional Subcommittees

In addition to the work mentioned above, there were 2 subcommittees created based on the work of the UASC retreat in August. These groups had productive and engaging discussions around their topics and helped to lay the groundwork for the next stages for the UASC. These included Assessment Mentorship and Templates and Definitions. The Assessment Mentorship subcommittee discussed the possibility of creating a mentorship program connecting staff and faculty with skill and experience in assessment with staff and faculty early in their assessment careers. Ultimately, this subcommittee determined the effort to build such a program was not possible to commit to at this time and there were other assessment priorities to focus on. The Templates and Definitions subcommittee discussed the creation of a standard set of assessment templates and shared definitions for the WMU community, ensuring both more efficient assessments and greater consistency across the university. This work is ongoing.

As shown by this report, the UASC is working to enrich the culture of assessment, collaborations across campus, and promote learning and assessment use across the institution. Our focus on learning and exploring new issues in assessment as well as cross department and division partnerships is highlighted particularly by the work of this year.

As always, we welcome any comments, suggestions and questions. Thank you for your support of our work.

C: UASC