

# Assessment Plan

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**Arkansas Tech University**

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Office of Assessment & Institutional Effectiveness

Division of Academic Affairs

Arkansas Tech University

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# Introduction

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## Context and Goals

While ultimately successful, the November 9-10, 2020 accreditation visit for reaffirmation of Arkansas Tech University (ATU) as an Open Pathways institution identified areas of both strength and weakness in the processes affiliated with the assessment of student learning at ATU. This document describes and defines the direction of the Office of Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness (OAIE) to address and improve on problems identified by both the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) peer review team as well as the staff of the OAIE.

Assessment occurs in all courses, programs, colleges and academic support units at the university. As pointed out in the Assurance Review Final Report from the review team, “[T]he team believes the campus has committed to an assessment program that reflects good practice.” However, while assessment has been occurring on an annual basis at ATU, its documentation has not been consistent across all departments and units. Links between the curricular, the co-curricular and academic support units are not clear. Work often occurs in silos rather than as the seamless cycle of student learning that is the ideal.

OAIE has adopted the Weave assessment management system to aid in data collection and dissemination for annual assessment, program review, accreditation, faculty credentials, and strategic planning.

The Office of Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness has adopted the following mission statement to contribute to the university mission, particularly assessing the areas of student success and excellence, progressive intellectual development and civic engagement and in the achievement of goals towards the betterment of Arkansas, the nation, and the world.

The Office of Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness (OAIE) facilitates the collaborative culture of assessment and continuous improvement of Arkansas Tech University’s academic and administrative programs and services. By providing resources

and technical expertise to assist in the systematic development, review, and collection of data, the OAIE guides the university in the reflective practices that lead to evidence-based decision making.

The work of the OAIE encompasses five overarching areas: Annual Assessment, Institution-wide Assessment, Accreditation, Training, and Administrative Work. In anticipation of a new university strategic plan, as well as based on the goals of ATU's colleges, divisions, programs, units and the curriculum and co-curriculum the OAIE has the following specific goals under our overarching framework. Taking these actions to address the demands of continuous improvement and to address requirements for both an Interim Monitoring Report for Core Component 4B, and the fourth year Assurance Review will allow the university to successfully meet HLC standards for assessment going forward:

#### Annual Assessment

1. Implement comprehensive, systematic, and sustainable assessment at all levels of the institution through review and feedback on assessment plans, including completion of an audit of all program learning outcomes and the mapping of each degree's curriculum to those outcomes.
2. Provide an accelerated review and reporting process of all assessment reports to allow for additional reporting of 'closing the loop' activities prior to September 30, 2022.
3. Provide a framework for the work of the Student Learning Assessment Committee to direct, respond to, and improve the campus-wide assessment process to include co-curricular activities and high impact practices.

#### Institutional Assessment

4. Prepare an annual institutional assessment report demonstrating through evidence the collection of assessment data, the use of that data to improve student learning and institutional effectiveness, the data-informed allocation of resources, and assessment-based decision-making.

5. Assist the General Education (GE) program, currently being revised, in improving its assessment of disparate GE courses, creation of appropriate standardized rubrics for measuring student achievement, and reporting of student learning in the GE program.

6. Create a structure and process for assessment, improvement, and reporting back on the successful accomplishment of strategic goals for the university and departmental/ programmatic strategic plans.

7. Serve as a resource for all university constituents to engage in assessment best practice within their own units, programs, colleges, and divisions. Specifically, coordinate activity around co-curricular and high impact practices from all academic degree programs in conjunction with Student Learning Assessment Committee - see #3 above).

### Accreditation

8. Assist all programs coming up for reaccreditation with their specialized accreditation or ADHE program review to commit to an earlier schedule of preparation in order to have adequate student learning assessment data to provide during their reviews.

### Training

9. Create an ongoing series of training programs that can become part of the CETL badging project for the professional development of both faculty and staff.

### Administrative

10. Apply for and be approved for the Excellence in Assessment designation from NILOA (National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment) that would serve as a program review for the Office of Assessment & Institutional Effectiveness as well as provide evidence of best practice for assessment for the fall 2024 mid-cycle review.

**\*A Four Year Roadmap of ATU Academic Assessment** following this page details the action items that need to take place by the end of the spring 2021, fall 2022, and fall 2024 semesters to assure a successful mid-cycle report from HLC in fall of 2024.



# Four Year Road Map



## FOUR YEAR ROAD MAP FOR ATU ACADEMIC ASSESSMENT SP 21 - FA 24

WHERE WE HAVE BEEN	WHERE WE ARE			WHERE WE ARE GOING
	By spring 2021	By fall 2022	By fall 2024	
<p>Spotty use of Weave Assessment System for reporting on Annual Assessment, but better than previous TracDat system</p> <p>Longstanding CPGE system in use for capturing GE data did not allow for adequate comparisons between courses in different disciplines, also generally part of end of course grade assignment which made for questionable utility for GE outcomes assessment</p> <p>No reporting structure for approval of annual assessment reports from departments through DH, Dean, and Office of Assessment</p> <p>2020 HLC Reaffirmation finds inconsistent assessment and gaps among academic program - 4B met with concerns and assigned monitoring</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Student Learning Assessment Committee completes an audit of PLOs</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Learning outcomes differentiated by degree level</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accelerated schedule of annual assessment begins</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Approval structure of department head, dean, and Assessment Office begins</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Current Curriculum Maps for all degrees, both Russellville and Ozark, added to Assessment website.</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Listing of High Impact Practices in all courses/programs</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Identification of academic co-curricular opportunities</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Identification of membership on academic program assessment and/or curriculum committees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Degree programs have updated Weave projects with updated PLOs, curriculum maps</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> All assessment projects used to house agendas/minutes of degree program curriculum and/or assessment committees</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> two years of approved assessment plans displaying at least two outcome data each year available in Weave</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gen Ed rubrics for all outcomes created and at least one cycle of assessment occurred for each goal</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Regular schedule of HLC data and evidence established and being collected</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Mid-point assessment reviews taking place regularly on schedule with ADHE and external accreditor program reviews</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Goals for past years achieved</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Three full years of assessment reports and closed loops completed and available through Weave</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> General Education beginning to show identifiable trends in student learning that can be addressed with focused initiatives</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> New processes for co-curricular and academic program review are fully implemented and sustainable</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Co-curricular assessment occurring as part of annual assessment</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> HIP assessment integrated into annual assessment reports</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Application submitted to NILOA for Excellence in Assessment Award</li> </ul>	<p>Toward an integrated, meaningful process of assessment to create a collaborative culture of continuous improvement at Arkansas Tech University that is recognized as an exemplar</p>

# Annual Assessment

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## Academic Degree Programs

### Assessment Cycle

During the spring semester of 2021, the Student Learning Assessment Committee with the direction of the director of OAIE will review all degree program learning outcomes and provide feedback to departments. Outcomes will be evaluated on specificity, measurability, and appropriateness for the degree level. The Student Learning Assessment Committee is currently composed of a faculty member representing each college in the university as well as a staff/faculty member from both the Ozark campus and the Student Affairs division. The committee will use a rubric to guide their feedback which will be reviewed by the director prior to being sent to the department head and assessment committee for each degree. Committee members will not evaluate degrees that are guided by external accreditation standards.

A review of program learning outcomes is the first step toward reviewing and updating program assessment plans. Well-written learning outcomes are key in collecting accurate data to improve student learning. Programs with additional needs in developing stronger program learning outcomes have the assistance of both the committee and the assessment office to work as a department on writing actionable program learning outcomes. Once program learning outcomes are reviewed and/or revised, each program will be able to create a updated Curriculum Map that will be used to ensure that all learning outcomes are addressed sufficiently across the required curriculum. These maps will be posted next to the Degree Program Learning Outcomes on the Assessment website to provide public access and transparency.

### Reporting/Approval Structure

Accountability is vital to ensure on-time and consistent completion of assessment activity. To this end, the timeline for completion of annual assessment plans will migrate to the same academic year for entry, analysis, and improvement action steps. In spring 2021 input from department heads altered the timeline and reporting schedule to make assessment activities more intentional and less hurried. By requiring the completion of annual assessment on a calendar



year timeline, full faculty participation would be available. Data collection would be linked to analysis and action for improvement and not be forgotten by delaying the reflection on data to the following fall semester as has been the case. Creating a designated Assessment Day during the January Professional Development period will mark the beginning of the cycle and allow for the entire departmental faculty to take part in examining the just ended calendar year's assessment and identifying the upcoming year's focus.

An annual time table for completion of assessment reporting will be aligned to an approval process from the departmental faculty assessment committee to the department head to the dean to the Office of Assessment. A signature section within the first block of each assessment project will track approval progress with the status moved to Complete after final review by the director of Assessment.

### **Annual Assessment Completion and Reporting by Calendar Year**

<b>Fall Semester</b>	<b>Spring Semester</b>	<b>Summer Session</b>
<u>Before Dec. 15</u> Data collected during current semester will be added to Weave by departmental assessment cmte. or faculty.	<u>January Prof Dev Day</u> Faculty meet to discuss assessment data from previous year and plan improvements to be implemented in coming year.	<u>May 15 - June 15</u> Department head reviews degree program assessment sites in Weave. Adds name and date in Academic Year block once reviewed and approved.
	<u>Before May 6</u> All faculty discussion, meeting notes, data analysis, and recommendations made during January PD day entered in Weave, and status marked for Internal Review.	<u>Jun 16 - July 15</u> Dean reviews program assessment sites in Weave. Adds name and date in Academic Year block once reviewed and approved.
	<u>Before May 6</u> Data collected during current semester will be added to Weave by departmental assessment cmte. or faculty.	<u>July 16 - Sept. 30</u> Director of Assessment reviews program assessment sites in Weave. Adds name and date in Academic Year block once reviewed and approved. Changes status for each degree assessment plan to Complete.

### Co-Curricular/HIP Assessment

In the area of co-curricular and HIP assessment the first step in understanding the extent of their impact on student learning is to identify where, and how many of, these activities are happening. A survey sent out to department heads is collecting information on the types of co-curricular opportunities that can be associated with their degrees. We are looking for things like honorary society membership and leadership, art shows, theatre productions, competitions for students, etc. that allow a student to put into practice some of the content that they are learning through the curriculum of their associated degrees.

Once identified, the Student Learning Assessment Committee will create a process to assess the impact that these activities have on student learning. Tentative outcomes for assessment of co-curricular activity is included as an appendix to this document. (See Appendix B.)

Similarly, the survey asks to identify the high impact practices that are included in academic degrees as part of the curriculum at the program or course level. This inventory will assist the efforts that will be guided by a subgroup of the Student Learning Assessment Committee for High Impact Practices that will be assembled and will attend the summer 2021 AAC&U Institute on High Impact Practices and Student Success. This group will be composed of faculty and support personnel involved in both HIPs and SS areas and tasked with creating an action plan for increasing the prevalence of HIPs in the curriculum and assessing the impact of existing practices.

### **Academic Support**

The OAIE will continue working with academic support (administrative) units to complete the CAS (Council for the Assessment of Standards) program reviews to identify gaps and trends in institutional effectiveness. A timeline for program review in academic support units has been created and made available on the Assessment website similar to the one provided for academic units.

Unlike academic units, academic support units are able to complete assessment work throughout the fiscal year. Therefore the time line and reporting structure for these offices will

be created and updated by the Institutional Effectiveness Assessment Committee with reporting going through the appropriate vice president.

## **Institutional Assessment**

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### **Annual Reporting**

With the alteration of the annual assessment timeline and the addition of a reporting structure for approval of annual assessment reports from the department head through the dean and to the director of assessment, a comprehensive assessment report covering all areas of assessment from the previous year will be generated and provided to the Vice President for Academic Affairs each fall no later than September 30. This report will provide summaries of the assessment activities undertaken by college and include annual assessment, any program review or external accreditation activities, general education findings, and co-curricular and HIP assessment data to provide a comprehensive view of the status of student learning at ATU.

### **General Education**

The OAIE continues to support the General Education program by providing assistance on the GE Assessment subcommittee, as well as finding and creating opportunities for professional development of the committee members. Currently work is underway to create program wide rubrics or tests that will be used to consistently measure student learning in the General Education outcomes no matter the discipline or course in which instruction occurs. This will allow for student learning to be measured rather than a mere evaluation of the course which has been the focus in the past. Having standard rubrics will allow the General Education Assessment committee to provide information on which outcomes for each goal are not being met and allow for all courses assessing a particular goal to make improvements in that outcome area. Preliminary results from a pilot test over the Scientific Reasoning goal is already showing value in targeting specific gaps in student learning. (See Appendix C)

## **Strategic Planning**

The OAIE continues to assist the Office of the President by compiling yearly status reports for the goals and action items of the Strategic Plan. The director expects to play a role in the creation of the next university strategic plan starting in the 2021-22 academic year to ensure measurable outcomes and action items.

Additionally, the OAIE plans to act as a resource for strategic planning in any area/department of the institution to create actionable master/strategic plan documents. All strategic plans can be added to the Weave platform to aid in data collection, analysis, and reporting.

## **First-year Experience Courses**

In collaboration with the director of the First-year Experiences courses of TECH 1013 and 1001, OAIE will work to create an assessment plan that will collect student learning data from not just the two TECH first year courses, but also the discipline-specific first year courses which have been authorized for delivery by some disciplines. Comparisons can then be made to determine the impact of all these courses on student success.

## **NSSE (National Survey of Student Engagement)**

OAIE will continue to administer the NSSE on a bi-annual basis to provide data to the university and individual colleges and programs on the extent to which students feel that they have benefited from programming at ATU. The OAIE is currently in its third administration of the survey which is now able to show trend data for various indicators. The results of each administration is available the following October and presented to the institution through both individual and general presentations and datasets.

## Accreditation

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### **HLC Ongoing Reporting/Evidence Collection**

Preparation of the November 2020 Assurance Argument that supported the reaffirmation of accreditation required the collection of numerous items of evidence. Many of these documents will be needed annually to support upcoming accreditation activities and as such, OAIE is creating a list that will become an annual request from the associated office. Requesting this documentation at the time it is created will save work and time when those documents are needed for the mid-cycle review or upcoming reaffirmation work.

### **ADHE Program Review**

Academic programs that do not have an external accrediting body are required to undergo a program review on a 10-year cycle with the Arkansas Department of Higher Education (ADHE). Several programs in recent years have not been prepared to complete the self-study required in the process on a timely basis. As a means of forestalling this problem, programs will be reminded two years in advance by the OAIE of the timeline/schedule for upcoming ADHE program reviews. The schedule is also readily available on the Assessment website, and additional communication to the degree program will assist in keeping all programs on a regular schedule to ensure successful and timely review.

In addition to advance communication to keep to the schedule, degree programs will be required to report status of their response in the year following the program review as part of their annual assessment reporting. Any recommendations from external reviewers will be added to the degree program's assessment plan to ensure action and to document improvement.

### **External Specialized Accreditations**

Externally accredited degree programs are much more likely to know when their reaccreditation visits are due, but they will also benefit from additional communication and assistance in creating a framework for completion of their reaccreditation documentation. Externally accredited programs will also be required to add recommendations for improvement

of student learning from the external review to their annual assessment plans to show how they are addressing these recommendations and how student learning is impacted on an ongoing basis.

## Training

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### Topics

Training in assessment best practice is a constant activity for the Office of Assessment. There are topics that are delivered each year to both new faculty and staff as well as in refresher form to established employees. Such topics include:

Weave Assessment Management System	Writing Learning Outcomes
The Assessment Cycle	Curriculum Mapping
Data Analysis	Determining Appropriate Measures/Tools and Levels of Performance
Closing the Loop	Data Collection

One of the goals of the OAIE involves creating a badge as part of the professional development offerings in CETL in Assessment. Using Blackboard software, modules for each of the basic topics will be created to allow faculty and staff to complete on their own schedule. Additional opportunities to enhance the badging could be added to professional development days or external presenters as available.

Since 2019 fall semester, the OAIE has recognized an academic or academic support unit completing strong assessment through its Assessment Spotlight. A summary of the assessment activities of the unit are written and included on the Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness homepage. This recognition will continue as a way to both applaud units completing strong assessment and providing examples for the rest of the university.

## **Administrative Duties**

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### **Assessment Website Maintenance**

In order to maintain accurate reporting and communication with the university community, the Office of Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness maintains a current website that displays information on assessment process for both academic and academic support units on both the Russellville and Ozark campuses. This information includes academic degree learning outcomes and curriculum maps for all degrees, accreditation for both externally accredited and ADHE reviewed academic degrees and data on the General Education program.

Assessment resources and best practices are also displayed along with basic information on the assessment cycle and its component parts. In addition, an Assessment Grant program is administered and advertised through the website as encouragement and incentive to all units at Arkansas Tech to undertake innovative and creative assessment of student learning.

### **Weave Project Maintenance**

Arkansas Tech has chosen the Weave Assessment Management system to help organize and document assessment processes. The software requires ongoing maintenance to add and remove access for authorized users to assessment, accreditation, and strategic planning projects. The site also allows collection and display of credentials for use during accreditation and curriculum planning.

### **Committee Work**

Work continues to increase the involvement of faculty and staff members in assessment of student learning and institutional effectiveness. An enhanced level of participation of committee members is being developed for the Student Learning Assessment Committee, as well as for the Institutional Effectiveness Assessment Committee.

Participation by the staff of the OAIE continues on the Ozark Assessment Committee, the General Education Committee, and the Curriculum Committee to ensure cohesive, collaborative, and consistent assessment practice across the institution.



## Appendix A: Concurrent Program Assessment



### (Proposed) Co-curricular Program Outcomes at Arkansas Tech University

Co-curricular activities promote student learning outside of academic coursework. Arkansas Tech aligns its co-curricular outcomes with its general education goals with the intent of complementing and applying those outcomes developed through coursework.

#### **Career and professional development** (Communicate effectively)

- Activity allowed me to learn from the contributions and involvement of others.
- Activity allowed me to guide and/or assist a group or organization in meeting its goals.
- Activity allowed me to relate knowledge or make connections to future career options.
- Activity allowed me to develop long-term goals and objectives and/or makes plans to achieve them.
- Activity allowed me to take steps to initiate a post-graduation job search or seek graduate education.

#### **Application of research** (Apply scientific and quantitative reasoning & Think critically)

- Activity allowed me to create new understanding from interactions with others.
- Activity allowed pursuit of research and academic experience outside the classroom.
- Activity allowed me to use experience and research to create new insights.
- Activity allowed me to connect life experiences and research to appreciate perspectives other than my own.
- Activity allowed me to apply research and experiences to a new situation or to rethink previous assumptions.

#### **Understanding human diversity and globalization** (Develop ethical perspectives & Think critically)

- Activity allowed me to interact with others and feel like I belong and matter.
- Activity allowed me to work cooperatively with others, including people different from myself and/or with different points of view.
- Activity allowed me to listen to and consider others' points of view, including people different from myself and/or with different points of view.
- Activity allowed me to examine the impacts of human organizations and actions on the human and the natural worlds.
- Activity allowed me to explore multiple perspectives (such as cultural, disciplinary, and ethical) when considering the human and the natural worlds.

**Cultural enrichment and creative activity** (Apply the value of the arts and humanities)

- Activity allowed me to understand a cultural experience from my own and others' perspectives and recognize the views of people different from myself.
- Activity allowed me to understand my own identity and culture and to seek involvement with people different from myself.
- Activity allowed me to integrate thoughts and emotions with creative processes for increased insight and/or to formulate a new approach to an issue or project.
- Activity allowed me to create or perform a work by combining a variety of styles, techniques, academic training, and personal experience.
- Activity allowed me to combine ideas in original ways to modify an existing work or create something new.

**Service to the community** (Practice civic engagement & Develop ethical perspectives)

- Activity allowed me to better understand what it means to be a member of a community.
- Activity allowed me to recognize community institutions and organizations and their influence on people.
- Activity allowed me to adjust my own attitudes and beliefs through working within and/or learning from communities.
- Activity allowed me to connect and extend knowledge from my academic study to participation in community life, politics, and government.
- Activity allowed me to collaboratively work across and within communities and organizations to achieve a community aim.

**Personal Wellness** (Practice activities that contribute to a being physical, emotional, mentally, and spiritually healthy)

- Activity allowed me to understand how chronic diseases could be prevented through simple lifestyle changes.  
Activity allowed me to examine the adverse effects of prolonged stress on health.  
Activity allowed me to recognize how physical activity, healthy nutrition and restful sleep have an enormous impact on my health.  
Activity allowed me to realize that wellness is an active lifelong process.  
Activity allowed me to develop self-evaluation and self-assessment processes for wellness activities.

In addition to general education coursework, these activities serve as part of an overall strategy to strengthen the undergraduate student experience.