Part One: Summary of Assessment Activities

Provide a summary of all institutional assessment activities and guidelines used. Part I should highlight your institution’s activities that align with Middle States standards 7, 12 and 14. Include the organizational structure and institutional leadership for assessment activities.

At UMD, assessment practices have become embedded in the institutional culture, and have led to the following: Periodic review and revision of plans with regard to improving student learning; establishment of a cyclical review process; establishment of structural processes for informing the campus with regard to assessment results; and the incorporation of assessment results in short-term and long-term campus planning.

The assessment of student learning in academic programs is coordinated through the Provost’s Commission on Learning Outcomes Assessment, established in 2003. Charged by the Provost to work with all campus units as they develop learning outcomes and to establish a new standard for assessment at the University of Maryland, the Commission consists of three interacting groups of UMD faculty and administrators, and is chaired by the Associate Provost and Dean for Undergraduate Studies.

- The Planning Team establishes the agenda for and oversees the work of the entire Commission, and is comprised of leadership in Undergraduate Studies and Institutional Research, Planning and Assessment.
- The Deans’ Steering Committee, comprised of six college deans, serves as an advisory board for the Planning Team and meets as needed to discuss and decide policy issues.
- The College Coordinators serve as liaisons between the planning team and their respective deans and colleges. Each college designates one or two faculty members or academic administrators to serve as coordinators.

The assessment of student learning has been an institution-wide collaborative process focused on learning outcomes at course and program levels. Through this process, learning outcomes and assessment plans were developed for each undergraduate major and graduate program offered at the University. The assessment of student learning in each program has progressed over the past several years with the following highlights:

- In fall 2005, faculty in each degree program established program learning outcomes and the assessment methods that would be used to measure them. The Provost established that each program would assess the stated learning outcomes by March of 2010 and subsequently at least every four years.
- During that first cycle of assessment, programs submitted their plans for assessment in the fall, and submitted results and analysis the following spring. Concurrently, program and college assessment committees reviewed the assessment results and made recommendations for further action as appropriate. The College Coordinators submitted
assessment results and subsequent curricular actions and changes on behalf of their deans to the Provost via the Commission.

- The College Coordinators acted as peer reviewers at the institutional level and used rubrics to review and provide peer feedback for each program. These reviews were conducted on behalf of the Provost; at the conclusion of each year, the Chair submitted a summary report to him, along with each set of program feedback, which the Provost subsequently shared with each Dean.
- At the conclusion of that four-year cycle, each Coordinator summarized the assessment of student learning process in their college and provided analysis of how it would be improved.
- In this academic year (Fall 2010), the cycle of review has changed. From this year forward, each program will submit one report in the fall which summarizes the changes they have made in the past year due to assessment results, the results of assessments they administered in the past year, and a plan for assessments in the upcoming year. The peer review of those documents by the College Coordinators will continue.

The materials shared in Part Two of this document will exemplify this campus-wide and embedded process. Due to the size of the institution, and the responsibility each program has to state its programs goals and objectives based on disciplinary needs, the assessment of student learning resides mostly at the program level. Therefore this report represents each competency by way of a sampling from across campus of projects that investigate those areas. There are two notable exceptions to this decentralization of assessment. One is the assessment of the general education program, an example of which is included in one of the competency areas, and the future of which is detailed in Part Three. The other exception is our University Libraries, which has taken on the responsibility of assessing information literacy at the campus level.

Part Two: Assessment of Major Competency Areas

For each of the four competency areas listed below, discuss the institution’s current activities. Space is provided for three additional competencies, if applicable.

I. Written & Oral Communication

Institution’s definition of competency
Goal: Using standard English, University of Maryland undergraduates will communicate clearly and effectively in writing and orally for different audiences and purposes.

Level(s) at which the competency is assessed (Example #1)
This outcome was measured by assessing a sample of papers from 300- and 400-level classes written by English majors. The students are expected to be able to write persuasively using five criteria (see below).

Process used to evaluate competency (i.e., methods, measures, instruments)
Indicators for this standard include the demonstrated ability to: Acknowledge opposing points of view; use language effectively and grammatically; support points; develop an argument; and
state a thesis. One hundred papers were drawn from a pool of papers written by senior English majors in the following courses: Spring 2009 – ENGL304, ENGL410, ENGL440, ENGL478R; and Fall 2009 – ENGL404, ENGL408A, ENGL439F, ENGL451. Each paper was read by two members of the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee and analyzed for those five indicators.

Results of the assessment of this competency
The following percentages of students met the following criteria: Acknowledges opposing points of view (32%, with a significant number of papers showing this criterion as not applicable to the assignment); uses language effectively and grammatically (81%); supports points (92%); develops an argument (81%); and, states a thesis (82%). Four of the five indicators were achieved by 80% or more of the students. The average for all indicators was 74%.

The Undergraduate Curriculum Committee met to review the results of this outcome. As a result of this discussion they decided to make several changes. In the future, the department will collect longer papers written towards the end of the semester, since these papers are likely to allow a better analysis of all the indicators. The first indicator, “Acknowledges opposing points of view,” will be deleted, since most teachers do not formally require this of students in analytical papers. The fourth indicator, “Develops an argument,” will be revised for clarity to read “Develops a coherent argument.” These assessment results and revisions to the process were presented to the full faculty in Fall 2010 for discussion and implementation.

Level(s) at which the competency is assessed (Example #2)
Journalism requires 90 percent of students (assessed at the college level) to demonstrate written and oral communications skills through the ability to report relevant news stories at a level acceptable to a professional news outlet. The measure is taken in JOUR320 and JOUR360, which are intermediate reporting courses for print and broadcast. All majors must take one or the other. Students typically take this course in the second semester of their sophomore year or the first semester of their junior year.

Process used to evaluate competency
JOUR320 and JOUR360 instructors require students in all classes to submit two assignments each. The assignments are selected at the start of the semester and there is discussion among faculty to make sure the assignments are similar in nature. The students upload the assignments onto the college’s electronic assessment website database, called J-Portfolio. The instructors review both assignments and then evaluate them for their research, writing and self-editing. They are provided detailed rubrics on the website and rank the assignments on a 1 to 5 scale. Results are shared with the students to help them improve.

Results of the assessment of this competency
The results showed that the writing students hovered just at or slightly below the goal for success for several semesters. The results showed that 10 percent, sometimes more, of the students in some semesters were not proficient in research, writing and/or editing. The faculty reviewed these results and agreed that the problem was likely due to the instruction students received in JOUR201, the beginning news-writing and reporting class, taught primarily by adjunct instructors. In spring 2010, the Programs and Curriculum Committee recommended adopting lead instructors for all courses with multiple sections to address consistency problems like the
The faculty agreed to adopt lead teachers for several courses in fall 2010, including JOUR201.

The lead instructor for JOUR201 in fall 2010 is a teacher who has taught the course since 1999. She held a training session for all adjuncts in August and again in January and is assisting the instructors with syllabi and assignments, observing them in their classrooms to provide encouragement and feedback and talking to students about their experience in JOUR201. While this is the largest of the College’s skills classes, this oversight and assistance also is occurring in other classes — editing, intermediate reporting, online reporting, ethics and law. Although it is too soon to measure the impact, anecdotally adjunct and other faculty say they find the feedback helpful and believe it has improved their teaching methods.

**Level(s) at which the competency is assessed (Example #3)**

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Studies assesses the written communication, as well as critical reasoning and research skills, of its undergraduates by their performance on the final written paper for the 400-level capstone course of the LGBT Studies certificate (LGBT488).

**Process used to evaluate competency**

The required written papers are assessed through the use of rubrics. Skills covered in the rubrics include:

- Student writes fairly clearly and coherently in a long essay;
- Student synthesizes and applies major concepts pertaining to the lives, experiences, identities, and representations of LGBT persons;
- Student makes effective use of the research methods and vocabulary of LGBT Studies;
- Student distinguishes his or her own argument from the argument in a critical source.

**Results of the assessment of this competency**

According to LGBT’s rubrics, in 2009-10, 85% of the student papers in LGBT488 met all five of the assessment indicators, with two partially failing. The department’s goal was to have at least 75% of students meeting most of the assessment indicators.

In response to the low quality of the papers that did not meet the evaluation criteria, LGBT Studies will work closely with instructors to encourage students’ more timely progression in their research and writing (including submission of a detailed outline of the essay as well as a rough draft for a peer review session prior to the final deadline date). LGBT Studies is also building an archive of teaching tools related to improving writing skills and working harder to ensure student compliance with writing prerequisites and with the hierarchy of courses within the program itself, since lower-division LGBT courses focus substantially on building students’ writing skills.
II. SCIENTIFIC AND QUANTITATIVE REASONING

Institution’s definition of competency
Goal: University of Maryland undergraduates should understand and be able to apply basic scientific and mathematical reasoning to their research efforts and critical analyses.

Level(s) at which the competency is assessed (Example #1)
Students in the Psychology Department are required to complete two 400-level Psychology laboratory courses. This assessment occurs in one of these courses, Psychology 433: “Basic Helping Skills: Research and Practice.” In this course, students are expected to demonstrate competency in understanding and applying basic research methods in psychology, including research design, data analysis, and interpretation. Specifically, students will demonstrate the ability to:
- Formulate testable hypotheses;
- Select and apply appropriate methods; collect, analyze, interpret, and report data using appropriate statistical strategies;
- Recognize limitations in applicability of results; and
- Demonstrate technological competency and information literacy related to research methods.

Process used to evaluate competency
The department developed the following rubric to assess student competency in psychological research methods:
- Accomplished/Excellent: Shows exceptional understanding of research methods that will enable the student to make a scholarly contribution.
- Proficient/Good: Has good foundation in research methods and shows evidence of being able to apply knowledge to new problems.
- Developing: Shows some understanding of research methods but not able to apply knowledge to new problems.
- Novice/Inadequate: Does not understand basic principles of research methods.

The department then collected a representative sample of 28 final student projects from PSYC433. The final project required students assess their own growth in the use of helping skills over the course of the semester by comparing their performance in a mock helping session early in the semester with their performance in a similar helping session later in the semester. The project required students to synthesize a number of skills developed over their time in the major with a particular emphasis on research methodology. Using the rubric above, the Director of Undergraduate Studies reviewed and scored the 28 projects. The department set a goal of 75 percent of students scoring “Proficient/Good” or higher.

Results of the assessment of this competency
The assessment results were as follows:
- Accomplished/Excellent: 2/28 (7 percent)
- Proficient/Good: 20/28 (71 percent)
- Developing: 6/28 (22 percent)
The department thereby determined that students were meeting the goal of at least 75 percent demonstrating proficiency in research methods (78 percent demonstrated proficiency or excellence). The department did find, however, that students were demonstrating proficiency in the department's four other learning outcomes at higher success rates, and therefore decided to implement a change aimed at improving student research method competency anyway. The department developed a new research methods course to be incorporated into the major.

Level(s) at which the competency is assessed (Example #2)

All UMD students are required to take at least two courses in the physical and/or life sciences as part of their CORE General Education requirement. The following assessment is of the CORE Life Sciences and is therefore at the University Level. Students are assessed on their ability to: 1) communicate about science using appropriate oral and written means, and 2) demonstrate understanding of the broad principles of science and the ways scientists in a particular discipline conduct research.

Process used to evaluate competency

Students were asked to read an article and answer questions related to a chosen concept. They had to be able to fully explain the concept as they understood it and be able to tell how this concept related to the article. Furthermore, they had to cite examples from the article relating to the concept about which they were writing.

In this assessment, 734 students were evaluated. Of these 734 students, 324 were in a post-test group, and the remaining 409 were in a pre-test group.

Results of the assessment of this competency

In measuring students’ ability to identify relevant scientific concepts:

- 90% of the students had a good understanding of at least one broad principle of science
- 4% had a basic understanding of at least one broad principle of science
- 4% had some understanding of at least one broad principle of science
- 2% had inadequate understanding of at least one broad principle of science

In the area of being able to explain key concepts in the article:

- 31% had a good understanding
- 27% had a basic understanding
- 27% had some understanding
- 15% had inadequate understanding

In having the ability to understand the context of the article and apply this understanding:

- 24% had good understanding
- 42% had a basic understanding
- 29% had some understanding
- 4% had inadequate understanding

These results indicated that students appear to learn facts well, but that they are more challenged by communicating about science. The findings were consistent for both the pre-test and the post-test samples.
These results influenced the planning of the Marquee Courses in Science and Technology as well as the design of the new General Education plan for UMD. For the Marquee courses, more writing assignments were inserted into those courses in the year following this assessment. In addition, many of the courses incorporated presentations or poster sessions where students made public explanations of their poster. The new General Education plan includes more emphasis on writing and critical thinking in all disciplines.

III. CRITICAL ANALYSIS AND REASONING

Institution’s definition of competency
Goal: University of Maryland undergraduates should learn and develop critical reasoning and research skills that they can apply successfully within a wide range and intersection of disciplines inside and outside of academia.

Level(s) at which the competency is assessed (Example #1)
Students in the Classics department are required to demonstrate the ability to interpret the cultural context of texts through a variety of methodological approaches at the advanced level. Specifically, the assessment includes a sample of students enrolled in several upper-level Greek and Latin courses.

Process used to evaluate competency
Students’ critical analysis and reasoning skills are assessed in a final exam and project. Evaluators look for demonstrated knowledge of the historical context of works of Latin and/or Greek literature; ability to place works of Latin and/or Greek literature in their generic tradition; a demonstrated understanding of the cultural context of works of Latin and/or Greek literature; and the ability to interpret primary source material through one or more applied methodologies. The department reviews a sample of exams and papers from courses taken by majors in the department. Selected faculty summarize and report their findings in writing to the department. 100% of majors should achieve proficiency in their ability to critically analyze primary texts in Latin and/or Greek at the advanced level.

Results of the assessment of this competency
Three members of the Classics faculty examined two final exams and two final project from LATN410 (Latin Historians), three final exams from GREK301 (Scenes from Athenian Life), and three final projects from GREK472 (History and Development of the Greek Language). These exams and final projects asked students to analyze the following: the historical context of literary works; the place of literary works in their generic tradition; and the cultural context in which literary works were produced. Students were also asked to interpret literary texts or material culture through one or more applied methodologies. The results were as follows:

- Historical Context: Outstanding 5, acceptable 6, unacceptable 1, not applicable 18
- Generic Tradition: Outstanding 7, acceptable 9, unacceptable 1, not applicable 13
- Cultural Context: Outstanding 5, acceptable 5, unacceptable 4, not applicable 16
- Applied Methodologies: Outstanding 5, acceptable 4, unacceptable 4, not applicable 17

(Note: these numbers represent the number of exams multiplied by the three readers. In general the three readers agreed in their assessment of individual exams.)
The Classics department reviewed their findings and found that, in general, their criteria for assessment should be reconsidered and tailored to the different orientation of the Greek as opposed to Latin courses. In both categories they believe all four rubrics are addressed extensively as it stands, but the rubrics need to be made explicit in course syllabi and assessed with a more diverse pool of samples.

Additionally, two major issues arose during evaluation: 1) It is the general consensus that language itself is an integral part of the cultural rubric; 2) there is some argument as to whether cultural and historical context are separable. The second of these is contingent on the instructor and course, and could be addressed individually. As a result of these findings, the Classics department developed two specific goals for individual courses: 1) Educate students in the literary, cultural, and historical background of ancient texts (where applicable) 2) discuss the applied methodologies used in approaches to texts.

**Level(s) at which the competency is assessed (Example #2)**

Students in an Electrical and Computer Engineering course are expected to understand and apply principals of engineering ethics, and demonstrate the following: (i) Ability to make informed ethical choices; (ii) a robust understanding of and ability to correctly apply the Engineering Code of Ethics; (iii) an understanding of professional and ethical issues in an international context; and (iv) an understanding of and ability to identify conflicts of interest (COI) as well as how to appropriately handle them.

**Process used to evaluate competency**

Students’ understanding and application of principals of engineering ethics are assessed by a Course Oversight Committee (COC), which includes the instructor and others involved in teaching the course. The COC uses the following procedures:

1. The COC established rubrics with four dimension to evaluate students' performance for each competency (i.e., undeveloped, developing, competent, and mastery)
   a. Each of the four dimensions (i-iv) has its own rubric with the separate competency levels defined by detailed performance characteristics.
2. The course instructor applied the rubrics to relevant exam questions/assignments which were specifically designed to distinguish between the different competency levels.
3. Assessment spreadsheets were used to record, tabulate, and graphically display results.
4. The COC wrote a report documenting its activities. The report was then reviewed by the Undergraduate Affairs Committee for further evaluation, synthesis, and action.
5. The indicator for success is 80% of the students achieving competency or mastery.

**Results of the assessment of this competency**

Results over a number of semesters indicated students were having great difficulty dealing with ethical issues and dilemmas in a sustained and sophisticated fashion. The long-range solution to this was the introduction of a 3-credit undergraduate course dealing with the ethical and social dimensions of engineering that is now a requirement for freshmen.

A total of 95 electrical engineering students were assessed in ENEE200 during the last academic year – 78 in Fall 2010 and 17 in Winter 2011. For Fall 2010 the result for the “Conflicts of
Interests” dimension (iv) were: Mastery: 0%; Competent: 24%; Developing: 38%; Undeveloped: 37%. Based on these results the following modifications were made prior to Winter 2011: (1) More lecture time and discussion were devoted to COI; (2) when relevant, an effort was made to highlight COI issues throughout the course; and (3) students were required to watch an ethics video, “Henry’s Daughters” which had a number of COI scenarios. With these changes, there was a marked improvement in Winter 2011: Mastery: 0%; Competent: 76%; Developing: 23%; Undeveloped: 0%.

IV. TECHNOLOGICAL COMPETENCY

Institution’s definition of competency
Goal: University of Maryland undergraduates will be able to understand basic technologies and how these relate to their specific disciplines, and will be able to apply these technologies to their research and academic efforts.

Level(s) at which the competency is assessed (Example #1)
Students enrolled in a geography course are required to demonstrate an understanding of the fundamental principles, concepts, and knowledge of geographic technologies used in the acquisition, processing, and analysis of spatial geographic data.

Process used to evaluate competency
The geography department developed a rubric to assess students' ability in a geographic information systems courses. The rubric identified the following ratings to assess student technological competency, students competency is either:

- Accomplished: Exhibiting 90-percent level grasp of material;
- Proficient: Exhibiting 80-percent level grasp of material;
- Acceptable: Exhibiting 70-percent level grasp of material;
- Novice: Exhibiting between 50- and 60-percent level grasp of material; or
- Unacceptable: Exhibiting less than 50-percent level grasp of material.

Students were assessed in six different laboratory assignments within the information systems courses, in competency areas such as, digitizing, geodatabases, computer cartography, and spatial analysis. The analysis continued across four semesters, and the department goal is that at least 80 percent of the representative samples of students meet the “Acceptable” level according to the rubric.

Results of the assessment of this competency
At least 80 percent of students performed at or above the “Acceptable” level on all six laboratory assignments. Moreover, the Technical Assessment Committee then collected anecdotal data from the faculty teaching the course across all four semesters to determine if there was a common thread among students who had not performed as hoped on the assignments. The committee determined that, in many cases, those students had not developed adequate quantitative skills before enrollment in rigorous technical courses such as Geography 373. Their resulting action was to make one Calculus course and Geography 306 (Introduction to Quantitative Methods for the Geographic Environmental Sciences) pre-requisites for Geography
373, which – together with Geography 372 (Remote Sensing) – serves as the gateway for more technical advanced courses in the department.

**Level(s) at which the competency is assessed (Example #2)**

All of the undergraduate teacher preparation programs require that candidates demonstrate competency on the Maryland Teacher Technology Standards (MTTS). To achieve proficiency on the MTTS standards, teacher candidates must demonstrate the ability to: Use technology to interpret and analyze preK-12 student and school data to develop data-driven instructional decisions; and design, deliver and assess learning experiences that integrate technology, are data-driven, and are designed to improve preK-12 student achievement.

**Process used to evaluate competency**

Teacher education candidates complete a Professional Teaching Portfolio to document their competence on the MTTS. This portfolio is completed during the senior year, as part of the students’ year-long internship in a Professional Development School. The technology portion of the Portfolio rubric (see examples from the early childhood and elementary education programs) is used to evaluate candidates’ performance on the MTTS.

**Results of the assessment of this competency**

Students performed very well on the portfolio in the Elementary Education Program and received an overall portfolio score rating (33.92) that fell within the **Proficient Threshold** (30-37). Students achieved ratings that placed them at the upper level of the Proficient range in all of the Portfolio subsections, except for **Technology Integration**, where students received an average rating of 7.19. This score falls on the lower end of the Proficient range (6-10).

The **Technology Integration** section, which is a new component of the Portfolio, was administered for the first time this past academic year. The intent of this programmatic change was to infuse more technology into the Portfolio and to ensure that students make demonstrable progress on meeting the MTTS Standards. Based on the findings from the first administration of this instrument, the rubric has been expanded to include additional indicators related to “understanding the legal, social, and ethical issues related to technology use;” and “designing, implementing, and assessing learning experiences that incorporate the use of technology in a curriculum-related instructional activity to support understanding, inquiry, problem-solving, communication and/or collaboration.” The program will continue to monitor student progress on this aspect of the Portfolio and make programmatic revisions, as appropriate.

**V. INFORMATION LITERACY [additional competency]**

**Institution’s definition of competency**

Goal: University of Maryland undergraduates will learn and develop information literacy skills that they can successfully apply within a wide range and intersection of disciplines inside and outside academia.

The University Libraries’ information literacy program exists to teach individuals the concepts and logic of information access and content of resources, to prepare individuals to make both...
immediate and lifelong use of information effectively, to foster information independence and critical thinking, and to promote awareness of the paramount importance of information literacy in achieving academic excellence. The University Libraries tie their learning outcomes to the Association for College & Research Libraries (ACRL) Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education.

**Level(s) at which the competency is assessed (Example #1)**
Course level; Library Day for ENGL101 – Academic Writing, a fundamental studies course that satisfies the English composition writing requirement for undergraduates.

**Learning Outcomes:**
1. At the end of the session, students will be able to choose appropriate library resource(s) for their information need. ACRL Standard 1 (2b, 2c.)
2. At the end of the session, students will be able to differentiate between scholarly and popular sources. ACRL Standard 2 (2d.)
3. At the end of the session, students will be able to construct one (or more) search strategies using Boolean logic. ACRL Standard 2 (2d.)

**Process used to evaluate competency**
In spring 2010, 32% or 479 students attending 22 sections of ENGL101 were directed at the end of class to complete an online assessment form linked to a library page. The six-question assessment form (2 questions per learning outcome) was built using Zoomerang.com; the Libraries have a subscription to this software for assessment purposes. The goal is that eighty percent of students will answer questions correctly.

**Results of the assessment of this competency**
For learning outcome 1, two questions were asked; the results were combined. Seventy-nine percent of students learned how to differentiate between a catalog and a database. For learning outcome 2, two questions were posed; the results were combined. Seventy-nine percent of students learned how to differentiate between popular and scholarly sources. For learning outcome 3, two questions were posed; the results were combined. Sixty-six percent of students could identify which search strategy would retrieve the best results.

Overall, they are satisfied with the learning goals and measures established for this information literacy program. They believe the program is making a solid impact in successfully introducing first-year students to key research resources needed to support their academic writing. For learning outcomes 1 and 2, the criteria were met within 1% point. No further action needed at this time.

For learning outcome 3, the criterion was not met. This is attributed in part to the poor design of one of the questions; the wording was confusing. The question will be either rewritten or the learning outcome will be rethought. Only 65% of students learned how Boolean logic is applied. Last year several changes were proposed to the training program for instructors. Other changes were made this year so that the delivery of content was consistent across the board. Short tutorials were developed to supplement the Library Day curriculum in fall 2009. In addition, an enhanced series of Research and Library Skills Exercises has been established. Finally, adding a
fourth learning outcome is being considered for next year to assess how students select and configure search terms for information discovery on their topics.

Level(s) at which the competency is assessed (Example #2)
Course level; Library workshop for ENGL392 – Legal Writing, a fundamental studies course that satisfies the undergraduate professional writing requirement.

Learning outcomes for session:
1. Students will be able to distinguish between a primary and secondary source for this discipline. ACRL Standard 1 (2c.)
2. Students will be able to recognize key uses for Westlaw. ACRL Standard 2 (2f.)
3. Students will be able to recognize the correct citation format for a law review article. ACRL Standard 2 (5c.)

Process used to evaluate competency
In fall 2009 and spring 2010, students were asked questions and directed to email their responses to the librarian. Nine sections of this course were assessed over the fall and spring semesters. A total of 97% of the students responded to the assessment over two semesters, for 153 responses. The goal is that eighty percent of students will answer the questions correctly.

Results of the assessment of this competency
For learning outcome 1, combined results reveal that 86% of students were able to distinguish between a primary and a secondary source as it pertained to legal research. However, there was a marked decrease in the number of students who correctly answered this question in spring 2010 (80% versus 92%). For learning outcome 2, results reveal that 86% of students were able to correctly describe the key uses for Westlaw (i.e., case law, law reviews, and determine if a law is still considered ‘good law.’) For learning outcome 3, results for the first two sections tested showed that 52% of students could identify a law review article based upon its citation. The wording on the assessment form was revised for the remaining seven sections to make the example citation clearer to interpret. Cumulative results for the remaining sections reveal that 88% of the students were correctly able to identify a citation from Harvard Law Review.

It is speculated that the first criteria may have been more easily met in the fall because the information about “primary versus secondary” sources was listed clearly as part of the table of contents, on the first page of the guide. The guide was revised for the spring and inadvertently the “primary versus secondary” information was not included in the table of contents. This may mean that, before the revisions, the students really didn’t learn the differences between the sources, but learned to look at the guide instead. Although it would have preferable for the students to remember the differences, at least they knew to use the guide.

To improve this instruction program, in ENGL392 an online guide has been provided to make it easier to read and to incorporate additional examples of citations and screen captures of major resource strategies and guides. For the future, the program will add the delineation of “primary” versus “secondary” sources to reinforce concepts covered in class.
Part Three: Evolution of Assessment Activities

Provide concrete examples of how your institution’s assessment activities have impacted and/or improved teaching and learning. Also, describe how the assessment of the major competency areas has been integrated into the structure of the institution.

The improvement in teaching and learning as a result of the work detailed in Part Two is included in those sections above. Because UMD’s learning assessment efforts are done to improve programs, the changes are evident at those levels.

The assessment of student learning at the University of Maryland, College Park, has evolved since the inception of the Provost's Commission on Learning Outcomes Assessment in 2003. Learning outcomes have become ingrained in the academic and functional processes of the university. We will share two examples below: The redesigned general education program; and the creation of a new course management and academic workflow system.

General Education

The University of Maryland is currently in the process of implementing a redesigned General Education program. In 2009, a Task Force was charged by the Provost and the Chair of the Campus Senate to design this new general education program. The Task Force completed its work in the spring of 2010 and the proposed program was approved by the University Senate in April 2010. Afterward, a plan for implementing this program was developed and approved by the University Senate in February, 2011. We are currently on target for putting this plan into effect for students entering in the fall of 2012.

One of the key elements of this new General Education program is that all components of the program are defined by sets of learning objectives as opposed to course content. During the summer of 2010, twelve committees consisting of over 60 faculty members were charged with defining the learning outcomes for each of the course categories in the new General Education program. Their work was driven by both their expertise in the relevant fields and our expectations regarding the skills and knowledge that every student who earns a University of Maryland degree should acquire, independent of their chosen major. Assessments from our existing CORE general education program were used to guide the committees to ensure that these objectives were emphasized. The learning outcomes for the new General Education program as constructed by these committees are attached as an appendix to this document.

Given the revisions of general education, it was decided that all courses offered at the University that will be used to satisfy a general education requirement need to be submitted for review. This applies to both new courses and existing CORE general education courses. The primary evaluative tool used to measure a course’s appropriateness for the new General Education program is the course’s learning outcomes goals. We are currently in the process of reviewing, revising, and approving more than 500 courses for the new program. In order to streamline this process, a new web-based course submission and review system was developed. The bulk of the information provided by people proposing courses for the new program consists of answers.
aimed at demonstrating how a course will ensure that students who complete the course will meet the relevant learning outcomes.

In the process of reviewing courses, we have already seen a number of programs that have made significant modifications to their courses in order to make them align more closely with the new learning outcomes. We have also had a number of courses that required revision as deemed by the review committees in order to assure that the outcomes can be met. More syllabi will now include course learning outcomes. This practice will clarify for students what skills and knowledge they can expect to gain from a course. This has been a process that has engaged the entire campus, with a very strong focus on learning outcomes.

Of course, the ultimate success of the new General Education program will depend strongly on our assessment of its ability to meet the intended goals. We are currently in the process of developing a detailed assessment plan so that, when the program rolls out in fall 2012, we will be able to perform useful assessment from the beginning.

**Kuali Student**

The campus is also in the process of implementing a new curriculum management system as part of the larger Kuali Student project which will replace our current mainframe and standalone student information systems. This system “…will be a modular, open source, standards-based next generation student system…” [http://www.kuali.org/ks]. It is being developed by seven Founder institutions (of which UMD is one), and an additional five Partner institutions, with support from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. This system will integrate functionality into one system that currently exists across several systems often challenged to communicate with each other, such as program proposal and approval, course proposal and approval, admissions, scheduling, and student registration. It is in its development phase, and over the next several years modules will be made available to the public for any institution to adopt. The first module, Curriculum Management, was released publicly in March 2011.

As a founding institution, UMD has been at the design table since the inception of this project, and has been instrumental in promoting functionality in the system that would support learning outcomes assessment. During development and at integral scope decision points, representatives from the other institutions did not appreciate nor agree with our insistence on including the ability to state and track learning outcomes in the system at the course, program and institution level. UMD dedicated many of its own development resources to move this functionality into the system, and has succeeded in integrating it into the curriculum management module. The system will support the identification of learning outcomes at the course and the program level. In addition to “free text” learning outcomes, the system also allows users to “tag” the learning outcomes with category labels; the category labels are organized by type and include skills, accreditation elements, and subject-specific categories. Additionally, users can search for learning outcomes by keyword or category and copy them into a new course or program; this allows programs to re-use standard learning objectives should they desire.

The combination of fully developed learning outcomes and category tags will facilitate searches of the curriculum inventory. Students will be able to search for courses based on learning
outcomes and therefore can tailor their course selection based on skills that they wish to acquire. Department heads and program managers can use the system to create a curriculum map, easily identifying the skills, subjects and accreditation areas most frequently addressed in the courses which lead to program completion. Representatives from partnering institutions have since acknowledged that this is a key aspect of Kuali Student, and that institutionalizing the collection of learning outcomes as it has will benefit every institution that utilizes it.

Selected references to learning outcomes from the Kuali Student website:

“…During the course of exploring Enrollment, a new vision emerged for an expanded "Academic Plan." The new vision turned into the Kuali Student Learning Plan (LP). The LP represents a highly personalized, customizable capability that allows learners and their advisers to plan, track, and evaluate individual learning goals and outcomes over the course of their academic career. LPs place learners at the center of their own learning experience, allowing them to manage and to monitor their progress, records and information within a self-defined, contextual framework. The LP is an andragogic approach to learning, empowering learners to map, and assess their own goals, experiences, and outcomes….”

“…In addition to the eight functional areas, Kuali Student will develop a concierge service that will support students in their academic planning by anticipating student needs, suggesting possible goals, allowing students to explore different goals, evaluating current progress and comparing proposed goals with existing and historical outcomes….”

Conclusion

The University of Maryland is incredibly proud of our progress in the establishment and assessment of student learning outcomes, and in the way that the importance of student learning has been integrated into the fabric of university processes. We will continue to develop in this capacity, and look forward to accomplishing even more before the next report is written.
Appendix: General Education Learning Outcomes

**Fundamental Studies**

**Academic Writing**
Courses in Academic Writing must address all 6 of the Learning Outcomes.
On completion of an Academic Writing course, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate understanding of writing as a series of tasks, including finding, evaluating, analyzing, and synthesizing appropriate sources, and as a process that involves composing, editing, and revising.
- Demonstrate critical reading and analytical skills, including understanding an argument's major assertions and assumptions and how to evaluate its supporting evidence.
- Demonstrate facility with the fundamentals of persuasion as these are adapted to a variety of special situations and audiences in academic writing.
- Demonstrate research skills, integrate their own ideas with those of others, and apply the conventions of attribution and citation correctly.
- Use Standard Written English and edit and revise their own writing for appropriateness. Students should take responsibility for such features as format, syntax, grammar, punctuation, and spelling.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the connection between writing and thinking and use writing and reading for inquiry, learning, thinking, and communicating in an academic setting.

**Professional Writing**
Courses in Professional Writing must address all 7 of the Learning Outcomes.
On completion of a Professional Writing course, students will be able to:

- Analyze a variety of professional rhetorical situations and produce appropriate texts in response.
- Understand the stages required to produce competent, professional writing through planning, drafting, revising, and editing.
- Identify and implement the appropriate research methods for each writing task.
- Practice the ethical use of sources and the conventions of citation appropriate to each genre.
- Write for the intended readers of a text, and design or adapt texts to audiences who may differ in their familiarity with the subject matter.
- Demonstrate competence in Standard Written English, including grammar, sentence and paragraph structure, coherence, and document design (including the use of the visual) and be able to use this knowledge to revise texts.
- Produce cogent arguments that identify arguable issues, reflect the degree of available evidence, and take account of counter arguments.

**Oral Communication**
Courses in Oral Communication must address at least 6 of the 9 Learning Outcomes.
Learning Outcomes in **bold** are **required**.
On completion of an Oral Communication course, students will be able to:
- Demonstrate an understanding of the role of oral communication in academic, social, and professional endeavors.
- Demonstrate effectiveness in using verbal and nonverbal language appropriate to the goal and the context of the communication.
- Demonstrate an ability to listen carefully.
- Demonstrate an enhanced awareness of one’s own communication style and choices.
- Demonstrate an ability to communicate interpersonally and interculturally with others in conversation, interview, and group discussion contexts.
- Demonstrate skill in asking and in responding to questions.
- **Demonstrate competency in planning, preparing, and presenting effective oral presentations.**
- **Use effective presentation techniques including presentation graphics.**
- Demonstrate awareness of communication ethics in a global society.

**Mathematics**

Courses in Mathematics must address at least 3 of the 5 Learning Outcomes.

On completion of a Mathematics course, students will be able to:

- Interpret mathematical models given verbally, or by formulas, graphs, tables, or schematics, and draw inferences from them.
- Represent mathematical concepts verbally, and, where appropriate, symbolically, visually, and numerically.
- Use arithmetic, algebraic, geometric, technological, or statistical methods to solve problems.
- Use mathematical reasoning with appropriate technology to solve problems, test conjectures, judge the validity of arguments, formulate valid arguments, check answers to determine reasonableness, and communicate the reasoning and the results.
- Recognize and use connections within mathematics and between mathematics and other disciplines.

**Analytic Reasoning**

Courses in Analytic Reasoning must address at least 4 of the 6 Learning Outcomes.

On completion of an Analytic Reasoning course, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate proficient application of the skills required by the Mathematics Fundamental Studies requirement, including the ability to communicate using formal or mathematical tools.
- Distinguish between premises and conclusions, or between data and inferences from data.
- Understand the differences among appropriate and inappropriate analytical methods for drawing conclusions.
- Apply appropriate analytical methods to evaluate inferences and to reason about complex information.
- Systematically evaluate evidence for accuracy, limitations, and relevance, and identify alternative interpretations of evidence.
- Use formal, analytical, or computational techniques to address real-world problems.
The I-Series

Courses in the I-Series must address at least 4 of the 6 Learning Outcomes.

On completion of an I-Series course, student will be able to:

- Identify the major questions and issues in their I-series course topic.
- Describe the sources the experts on the topic would use to explore these issues and questions.
- Demonstrate an understanding of basic terms, concepts, and approaches that experts employ in dealing with these issues.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the political, social, economic, and ethical dimensions involved in the course.
- Communicate major ideas and issues raised by the course through effective written and/or oral presentations.
- Articulate how this course has invited them to think in new ways about their lives, their place in the University and other communities, and/or issues central to their major disciplines or other fields of interest.

Distributive Studies

History and Social Sciences

Courses in History and Social Sciences must address at least 4 of the 7 Learning Outcomes.

Learning Outcomes in **bold** are **required**.

On completion of a History and Social Sciences course, students will be able to:

- **Demonstrate knowledge of fundamental concepts and ideas in a specific topical area in history or the social sciences.**
- Demonstrate understanding of the methods that produce knowledge in a specific field in history or the social sciences.
- Demonstrate critical thinking in evaluating causal arguments in history or in the social sciences, analyzing major assertions, background assumptions, and explanatory evidence.
- Explain how culture, social structure, diversity, or other key elements of historical context have an impact on individual perception, action, and values.
- Articulate how historical change shapes ideas and social and political structures.
- Explain how history or social science can be used to analyze contemporary issues and to develop policies for social change.
- Use information technologies to conduct research and to communicate effectively about social science and history.

Humanities

Courses in the Humanities must address at least 4 of the 7 Learning Outcomes.

Learning Outcomes in **bold** are **required**.

On completion of a Humanities course, students will be able to:

- **Demonstrate familiarity and facility with fundamental terminology and concepts in a specific topical area in the humanities.**
- Demonstrate understanding of the methods used by scholars in a specific field in the humanities.
- Demonstrate understanding of the creative processes and techniques used by practitioners in a specific field of the visual, literary, or performing arts.
- Demonstrate critical thinking in the evaluation of sources and arguments in scholarly works, or in the evaluation of approaches and technique in the visual, literary, or performing arts.
- Describe how language use is related to ways of thinking, cultural heritage, and cultural values.
- Conduct research on a topic in the humanities using a variety of sources and technologies.
- Demonstrate the ability to formulate a thesis related to a specific topic in the humanities and to support the thesis with evidence and argumentation.

Natural Sciences
Courses in the Natural Sciences must address at least 4 of the 6 Learning Outcomes. Learning Outcomes in **bold** are **required**.
On completion of a Natural Sciences course, students will be able to:
- Demonstrate a broad understanding of scientific principles and the ways scientists in a particular discipline conduct research.
- Apply quantitative, mathematical analyses to science problems.
- Solve complex problems requiring the application of several scientific concepts.
- Look at complex questions and identify the science and how it impacts and is impacted by political, social, economic, or ethical dimensions.
- Critically evaluate scientific arguments and understand the limits of scientific knowledge.
- Communicate scientific ideas effectively.
In addition to the Learning Outcomes above, on completion of a Natural Sciences course with a laboratory experience students will be able to:
- **Demonstrate proficiency in experimental science by:** making observations, understanding the fundamental elements of experiment design, generating and analyzing data using appropriate quantitative tools, using abstract reasoning to interpret data and relevant formulae, and testing hypotheses with scientific rigor.

Scholarship in Practice
Courses in Scholarship in Practice must address at least 4 of the 7 Learning Outcomes. Learning Outcomes in **bold** are **required**.
On completion of a Scholarship in Practice course, students will be able to:
- **Demonstrate an ability to select, critically evaluate, and apply relevant areas of scholarship.**
- Articulate the processes required to bring about a successful outcome from planning, modeling, and preparing, to critiquing, revising and perfecting.
- Demonstrate an ability to critique existing applications of scholarship, in order to learn from past successes and failures.
- Demonstrate an ability to collaborate in order to bring about a successful outcome.
- Recognize how an application of scholarship affects or is affected by political, social, cultural, economic or ethical dimensions.
- Produce an original analysis, project, creative work, performance or other scholarly work that reflects a body of knowledge relevant to the course.
- Effectively communicate the application of scholarship through ancillary material (written, oral, visual and/or all modes combined).

**Diversity**

**Understanding Plural Societies**

Courses in Understanding Plural Societies must address at least 4 of the 7 Learning Outcomes. On completion of an Understanding Plural Societies course, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate understanding of the basis of human diversity: biological, cultural, historical, social, economic, or ideological.
- Demonstrate understanding of fundamental concepts and methods that produce knowledge about plural societies.
- Explicate the processes that create or fail to create just, productive, egalitarian, and collaborative societies.
- Analyze forms and traditions of thought or expression in relation to cultural, historical, political, and social contexts, as, for example, dance, foodways, literature, music, and philosophical and religious traditions.
- Articulate how particular policies create or inhibit the formation and functioning of plural societies.
- Use a comparative, intersectional, or relational framework to examine the experiences, cultures, or histories of two or more social groups or constituencies within a single society or across societies, and within a single historical timeframe or across historical time.
- Use information technologies to access research and communicate effectively about plural societies.

**Cultural Competence**

Courses in Cultural Competence must address at least 3 of the 5 Learning Outcomes. Learning Outcomes in **bold** are required.

On completion of a Cultural Competency course, students will be able to:

- Describe the concept of culture.
- Explain how cultural beliefs influence behaviors and practices at the individual, organizational, or societal levels.
- Analyze their own cultural beliefs with respect to attitudes or behaviors.
- Compare and contrast differences among two or more cultures.
- Effectively use skills to negotiate cross-cultural situations or conflicts.