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To: University of Idaho Faculty

From: Provost's Council Membership
<http://www.uidaho.edu/provost/provostcouncil>

Subject: Curriculum design and assessment

An integral part of our work is the quality education we offer to our students, in and out of the classroom, in support of the University learning outcomes. We must fully engage in the design, implementation, and assessment of our curriculum and the impact we have on student learning. Current literature affirms that:

“The faculty hold primary responsibility for outcomes, curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment because all these elements comprise teaching and learning. Respectively, they form the end, means, and quality control of baccalaureate education.”¹

As administrators, our responsibility is to support this important faculty role through systems that enable success in this work. Our investment in the external program review and learning outcomes assessment and subsequent program follow up provide the foundation to continuously improving our programs and services. Each of us must invest and participate in these processes, most importantly in service to our students.

Accreditation bodies have also begun to understand that their “expectations about the quality of liberal education should and do influence the ongoing work of institutions and programs”². Our own accreditor, the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU), underwent an extensive remodel in 2010 of the standards to which our University is accountable. These new standards are framed within our own distinctive land-grant mission and the goals we have set for ourselves. They are rigorous in the expectation that we will actively participate in the continuous improvement loop necessary to refine our plans and meet our goals for the sake of a quality education.

Meeting the mission of our institution and delivering the quality education our students deserve requires that we move forward together to link the critical work of the faculty with the responsibility of the administration and our accrediting body. To that end, we must ensure that learning outcomes and program assessment are incorporated into the fabric of our work as part of setting goals for teaching/advising and considered annual performance reviews at every level (faculty, unit administrators, deans, and senior leadership).

¹ Taking Responsibility for the Quality of the Baccalaureate Degree: A Report From The Greater Expectations Project. 2004. Association of American Colleges and Universities. Washington D.C. Print

² Eaton, Judith, President, AAC&U Council for Higher Education Accreditation

Some initial expectations include:

- Collection of all syllabi each semester at the department level to ensure required components (e.g., learning outcomes, schedule) are included and best practices can be informed – due each January and September;
- Reflection on this fundamental component of teaching and advising in departmental dialogues and through annual performance reviews and goal setting;
- Full participation in the assessment and improvement cycle throughout the University system.

The working document attached is an overview of the various levels of responsibility and associated tasks and resources to support the continuing focus on learning outcomes and program assessment [<http://www.webs.uidaho.edu/ira/assess/index.htm>]. In addition, we have included a document containing the relevant sections of the University level accreditation standards for your reference. We join with you to accomplish this important work.