Mid-Cycle Evaluation Report

Submitted to the

Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities

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Response to Concerns and Recommendations re: Year One Report

Concern [un-numbered]: Eligibility requirement 2 is not addressed.

Boise State University inadvertently failed to address eligibility requirement #2 in our Year 1 report. The following two sentences address eligibility requirement #2:

Boise State University is a public institution of higher education established in accordance with Idaho Code Section 33-4001. The general supervision, government and control of the university are vested in the Idaho State Board of Education which acts as the board of trustees of the university (See Idaho Code Section 33-4002).

Concern 1: The institution should document approval of core themes by its governing board, disseminate core themes broadly and evaluate and incorporate revisions as appropriate.

Approval by Board: Boise State University presented the Core Themes of undergraduate education; graduate education; research and creative activity; and community commitment to the Idaho State Board of Education in February of 2012. The board unanimously approved the Core Themes for Boise State; the following is an excerpt from the minutes of that meeting.

APPROVED MINUTES STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
February 15-16, 2012
Boise State University
Dr. Schimpf identified and summarized the Core Themes for BSU. They included undergraduate education; graduate education; research and creative activity; and community commitment.
BOARD ACTION M/S (Edmunds/Soltman): To approve Boise State University’s Mission Statement and Core Themes as amended. The motion passed unanimously. Board members Luna and Atchley were absent from voting.

Dissemination: The dissemination of Boise State’s Core Themes has been accomplished as follows:

1. The core themes are listed on our website at http://academics.boisestate.edu/planning/core-themes/.
2. The core themes are used as the basic structure for the self-study guidelines for Five-Year Review of Academic Departments. http://academics.boisestate.edu/planning/self-study/
3. In the Program Prioritization process recently completed at Boise State, instructional programs and administrative & support programs each were required to respond to a prompt regarding the alignment of the program or unit to the mission, core themes, and strategic plan of the university. Appendix A, Mid Cycle Report appendix page 10, 12, 14
4. The University’s Strategic Enrollment Plan, presently under development, has as its foundation the mission, core themes, and strategic plan of the University. Appendix B, Mid Cycle report Appendix page 46

Evaluation and incorporation of revisions: The evaluation and incorporation of core themes is considered in the Mid-Cycle Evaluation that follows in this document, specifically in Section 1.C on page 14. In brief:

1. In general, the University’s core themes have proved robust, which is to be expected given that they cover the key areas of activity at the university (undergraduate education, graduate education, research and creative activity, and community engagement) and that they articulate well with four of the five goals of the university’s strategic plan.
2. We have, however, found two places where adjustments are being considered:
a. The core themes are lacking acknowledgement of the importance of stewardship of resources. This gap was brought to light during the Program Prioritization process, in which (i) productivity and efficiency of programs were important criteria for evaluation of programs, and (ii) the entire process is founded on the notion that the institution should work to ensure that resources are best aligned with the mission.

b. The core themes need additional focus on access and support for students from traditionally underrepresented groups. We have become aware of this gap as a result of the emphasis being placed by the Idaho State Board of Education on increasing the college completion rate in Idaho, and the key importance of focus on underrepresented groups in increasing college completion rate.

Recommendation: Boise State University should refine indicators of achievement to ensure that the indicators are meaningful, direct measures of the objectives. Std 1.B.2

(Additional text from the reviewer’s report for context: “The Indicators of success need to be reviewed and refined for the specificity and usefulness of the measures. Indicators should be focused on those that can provide meaningful information. Rationale for specific benchmarking should be included.”)

Evaluation of indicators of achievement is covered in the Mid-Cycle Evaluation that follows in this document, specifically in Section 1.D. on page 14. In brief:

1. Refinement of indicators has occurred as we have integrated and articulated the indicators with Key Performance Indicators of the University’s strategic plan and the strategic enrollment plan.
2. A number of indicators have proved particularly important to the university and have, therefore, enabled us to increase focus on those indicators. Those indicators that have emerged as being of key importance are: graduation rate, retention rate, number of baccalaureate graduates, number of doctoral graduates, and research expenditures.
3. The Idaho State Board of Education requires that each institution report on a set of indicators, giving them additional importance. Those indicators are: Number of degrees awarded, Unduplicated headcount of graduates, Headcount as a percent of enrollment, One year retention rate for new and transfer students, Expenditures per credit hour produced by the University, Degree completions per $100k of budget, and Credit hours and headcount of high school students earning dual credits.
4. In spite of the above, we have an overabundance of key performance measures for our Core Themes, and have work to do to narrow them further.
Mid-Cycle Evaluation Part I: The Process of Assessing Mission Fulfillment

Description of the institution’s plan for linking/aligning mission (Standard One) with mission fulfillment and sustainability (Standard Five). What is our process of assessing mission fulfillment? Who is involved in the assessment? Is the Board of Trustees involved?

I.A: Introduction

Program Prioritization: During the 2013-14 year, Boise State went through an importantly transformative experience: the program prioritization process (PPP). The process involved all instructional programs, academic departments, and administrative and support programs, all of which were evaluated in terms of four criteria developed by the university: relevance, quality, productivity, and efficiency. The Idaho State Board of Education, which mandated that all Idaho 4 year institutions go through the process, made clear that the process was not to focus on discontinuation of programs (as often occurs with program prioritization) but instead to focus on improvement of programs. We will make substantial reference to PPP throughout the present document because of the following ramifications of PPP for accreditation processes in general and for our Mid-Cycle evaluation in particular:

- For **instructional programs**, PPP caused us to develop measures of two of the PPP criteria, productivity and efficiency, and to strengthen already existing measures of the other two criteria, quality and relevance. These new measures are in addition to the assessment of achievement of Program Learning Outcomes, which is often the sole way in which instructional programs are evaluated.

- For **academic departments**, PPP caused us to develop a comprehensive set of metrics that fell into five categories, each corresponding to an aspect of departmental function: instructional programs, instruction beyond instructional programs, research and creative activity, community outreach and service, and elements related to advising, graduation success, and alumni. As the process progressed, a focus developed on two aspects of department function: ability of students to progress easily to degree completion and workload of faculty members relative to that at peer institutions. A comprehensive list of metrics for academic programs may be found in the appendixes for our program prioritization report, located at [http://president.boisestate.edu/prioritization/files/2014/09/B.-Program-Prioritization-Appendices-to-Final-Report.pdf](http://president.boisestate.edu/prioritization/files/2014/09/B.-Program-Prioritization-Appendices-to-Final-Report.pdf).

- For non-academic entities, which we term **administrative and support programs**, PPP required that for each program we develop measures of relevance, quality, productivity, and quality. Such measures will be of importance later in this document as we discuss the direct and indirect contribution of units to the university’s mission. In the longer term, these measures will provide an important foundation for our response to Standard Two (Resources and Capacity) in our Year Seven report.

- Although PPP was focused at the individual program level, not at the university-wide level, the process nonetheless brought to the fore that our Core Themes, objectives, and indicators had an important gap: they did not address the stewardship of resources by the university.

Perspectives for Assessing Mission Fulfilment: The assessment of mission fulfillment can be addressed conceptually from four perspectives.

- From the perspective of the **University**, we must determine if the University as a whole is fulfilling its mission.

- From the perspective of the **instructional program**, one focus of assessing mission fulfillment is determining whether students have achieved the intended learning outcomes of the instructional programs. PPP has provided us with a number of other measures directly related
to mission fulfillment, such as student satisfaction with the program, alignment of the program with mission, number of graduates, and progression to degree, and efficiency in use of resources.

- From the perspective of the academic department, we assess how academic departments, which are the core functionality of the university, contribute in terms of their functions of degree programs, service coursework, research and creative activity, and community outreach.
- From the perspective of the administrative and support unit, we determine how well units are directly contributing to the mission (e.g., producing graduates to contribute to the overall number of graduates) or indirectly contributing by providing support to the units that directly contribute (e.g., processing payroll for academic departments). Direct and indirect contributions depend on relevance to the community, alignment with mission, quality, productivity, and efficiency. As noted above, this perspective will be important in our addressing of Standard 2 in our Year Seven report.

Components of Mission Fulfillment: Another way to categorize the assessment of mission fulfillment is to conceive of that assessment as consisting of three components that we will address for each of the above three perspectives:

- Clarification of mission. Only once the mission has been fully clarified and defined is it reasonable to expect that assessment of mission fulfillment can take place. Otherwise, how is one to know what to assess and how to interpret that assessment?
- Assess performance. Assessment of performance requires the development of metrics that are chosen for their effectiveness in truly assessing performance, not for their convenience.
- Interpret performance and take action. First, to understand the implications of a particular level of performance, performance must be interpreted relative to benchmarks established to define what level constitutes mission fulfillment. Second, clarifications of mission, assessment of performance, and interpretation of performance have little usefulness unless actions are taken in response. Therefore, we regard the taking of action as being a key defining aspect of our overall assessment of mission fulfillment.

I.B. Assessment of Mission Fulfillment

As noted in the introduction, we address the four components of mission fulfillment from four perspectives: university-wide perspective, instructional program perspective, academic department perspective, and administrative and support unit perspective.

1.B.1: University-wide Perspective of Assessment of Mission Fulfillment

>Clarity of mission of the University has resulted from the following:

- As was described in our Year One report, prior to 2011 Boise State University did not have an internally developed mission, but instead was given a “role and mission statement” by the SBOE. However, in preparation for our Year One report, the SBOE charged the University with developing a new mission statement. At the same time, we developed our Core Themes and Core Objectives to provide detailed elaboration of the various aspects of our mission. There was broad participation in the process, as was described in our Year One report.
- Further elaboration of the ideas contained in our mission and Core Themes occurred during the development of our strategic plan, Focus on Effectiveness 2012-2017. Our Core Themes of Undergraduate Education and Graduate Education map well to our first two strategic goals: “Create a signature, high-quality educational experience for all students” and “Facilitate the timely attainment of educational goals of our diverse student population.” Our Core Themes of
Research & Creative Activity and Community Connection map well to our third and fourth strategic goals, respectively, which are “Gain distinction as a doctoral research university” and “Align university programs and activities with community needs.”

- We are presently in the midst of developing a Strategic Enrollment Plan (Appendix B) to guide our academic planning, recruiting efforts, awarding of financial aid, and other activities having to do with undergraduate enrollment. Importantly, the Strategic Enrollment Plan is grounded in the mission, Core Themes, and strategic plan, and no action should result from that plan unless it can be mapped explicitly back to the mission, Core Themes, and/or strategic plan.

> Assessment of Performance of the University has occurred by the following:

- In preparation for our Year One report, we developed a set of measures of University performance in terms of each of our Core Themes (Appendix C). As noted in Recommendation One for our Year One report, we developed an overly large number of measures as we attempted to be very comprehensive in our initial development of measures. We did, however, designate a subset of the metrics as “Key Performance Measures” (KPMs). We have placed those KPMs and associated data on our website. However, any attention that has been paid to the KPMs since their initial development has occurred only for those KPMs that overlap with the performance indicators described in the next bullet. The University is not required to report to the SBOE on our progress with regards to our KPMs for our Core Themes.

- We developed Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for our strategic plan (Appendix D), our strategic enrollment plan (Appendix B), and a yearly Performance Report required by the Idaho SBOE and the Idaho Division of Finance and Management (Appendix E). Because of the close articulation of our Core Themes with our strategic plan and strategic enrollment plan, there is substantial correlation between the KPMs and the KPIs, as is shown in Appendix F. We are required by the Idaho SBOE to report yearly on our progress with regards our strategic plan and to submit our Performance Report and we do so using the KPIs. A subset of measures within this report is explicitly required by the SBOE: production of graduates, retention rate, cost per graduate and per credit hour generated, and concurrent enrollment. Our Strategic Enrollment Plan is an internal document and its KPIs are not reported to the SBOE.

> Evaluation of Assessment Results and Resulting Actions

At the university level, how are assessment results evaluated? How do we determine whether or not the measures indicate mission fulfillment?

For one KPI/KPM, the annual number of baccalaureate graduates, the SBOE has given each institution a specific value that is deemed acceptable. Boise State is charged with increasing its number of baccalaureate graduates per year to eventually reach 3,416 by 2020. Thus far, we are ahead of that target, as shown in the figure. Several actions have resulted from the attention paid to this KPI/KPM:
• We have made the production of graduates the central tenet of our Strategic Enrollment Plan.
• As described in the next paragraph, we have undertaken a number of initiatives regarding retention and graduation rates, and the SBOE focus on graduates has strengthened our focus.
• The focus of our requests for resources from the state legislature has been on securing the instructional and advising resources that will enable us to meet the SBOE’s mandate.

For those KPIs that are associated with our strategic plan and our strategic enrollment plan, we have set aspirational targets. In a strict sense, these targets cannot be regarded as definitive in indicating mission fulfillment or lack thereof because they have not been defined as such. However, the actions that we take in response to a number of those measures have operationally defined certain levels as, if not indicative of failing to fulfill the mission, at least of warranting action. The following will illustrate.

• In 2006, our 1 year retention rate (2005 cohort) was 62.7% and our 6 year graduation rate (2000 cohort) was 22.5%. Both were judged by the administration to be unacceptably low and a range of initiatives were undertaken that led to substantial increases. As can be seen in the attached figure, there has been a sea-change in graduation rates beginning with the Fall 2007 cohort. However, although we have made substantial gains, we have aspirations to attain 80% and 50% for our retention and 6-year graduation rates, respectively, by 2019. Those targets are based on an informal examination of the rates at peers.

• Over the last 5 years (2008-2009 to 2012-2013), our number of doctoral graduates averaged about 10 per year. In response to our strategic plan, which called for increased number of doctoral programs and graduates, and partially in recognition of the importance of number of doctoral graduates in the Carnegie Basic Classification, we undertook several initiatives to increase our number of graduates: (i) We increased the number of doctoral programs from two in 2003-4 to four in 2007-8 to nine in 2013-14; (ii) We developed a number of strategies designed to facilitate the graduation of doctoral students, including a “dissertation bootcamp”, a “doctoral dashboard”, and the reassignment of a portion of master’s-level graduate assistant support to doctoral-level support. The result was that we achieved a peak of 34 doctoral graduates in 2013-14 and will likely average yearly graduation of about 25 for the next several years, more than double our previous number.

• In 2006-07, our annual externally funded research expenditures were $9.5M. The University underwent a culture shift and undertook a number of initiatives designed to increase overall research productivity, and as a result, our research expenditures increased to $17.3M in 2013-14. The following are a sampling of initiatives:
  o Embedded Office of Sponsored support personnel in the College of Engineering to provide comprehensive support at proposal development stage.
  o Consolidated pre-award and post-award services to provide consistent and seamless support to faculty; reduce redundancies and realize efficiencies.
• Developed and implemented a faculty development training series on topics related to proposal development and submission.

• We have undergone a complete revision of our general education curriculum in response to a number of indicators including: (i) 30 years with no updates, (ii) dissatisfaction with the lack of focus on 21st century educational needs, (iii) concerns raised by the NWCCU reviewers, especially about the assessment process. Revision started with creation of a task force in December 2008, and resulted in the implementation of the “Foundational Studies Program,” which is structured around a set of University Learning Outcomes that were inspired by the Association of American Colleges and Universities’ (AAC&U) Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP). The Foundational Studies Program is one of the examples used in Section II.B of this report.

There remain a number of Core Theme KPMs that do not have aspirational targets, nor have we defined thresholds of acceptability for them. Therefore, in addition to substantially narrowing down the number of Core Theme KPMs and reconciling them with KPIs for other plans for our Year Seven review, we will also need to specify thresholds of acceptability for all measures.

I.B.2 Instructional Program-level Assessment of Mission Fulfillment

>Clarity of mission has resulted from the following:

The primary characterization of the contribution of an individual instructional program to the mission of the university is its intended learning outcomes and the success of students in attaining those intended outcomes. Each program is required to establish and maintain Program Intended Learning Outcomes (PLOs). PLOs were revisited en masse recently during the following (i) Beginning with the 2012-13 catalog, the University requirement for a bachelor’s degree was changed from 128 to 120 credits. At nearly the same time, all departments were required to revise their baccalaureate curricula to incorporate our new general education curriculum, the Foundational Studies Program. During these two processes, departments were asked to revisit and revise their PLOs to ensure their continued relevance and correctness given the changes that were implemented. (ii) During PPP, the listing of PLOs was part of an overall evaluation of the quality of the assessment plan for the instructional program. The Foundational Studies Program’s assessment structure attends to both the ULOs and a portion of the PLOs.

In the Five-Year Review of Academic Departments process, departments are asked to address how each of their instructional programs contributes to various aspects of the core themes, and therefore to the mission of the university. This process assists departments in clarifying their contribution to mission.

During the PPP process, the contribution of instructional programs to the university’s mission was clarified in three ways: (i) Departments were asked to write an essay that described the alignment of the instructional program to the mission, core themes, and strategic plan of the university. (ii) The PPP process defined a set of metrics of instructional program effectiveness and impact. Our use of those metrics gave solid indication that the contribution of an instructional program to the university’s mission goes beyond whether students who graduate have achieved the PLOs to include whether students do, in fact, graduate; whether the department makes efficient use of resources; etc. (iii) One metric (annual number of graduates) was evaluated separately from all others, indicating the importance to the University’s mission of graduating students from our programs.

>Assessment of Performance of Instructional Programs has occurred by the following:

In the Five-Year Periodic Review of Academic Departments, the assessment of has been accomplished by evaluation of departmental responses regarding contribution to core themes. That assessment
consists of external reviewers, deans, and/or the Provost’s Office looking for areas of weakness or concern. There are no explicit guidelines as to what is acceptable or unacceptable in terms of performance.

PPP made use of a set of metrics to evaluate the relevance, quality, productivity, and efficiency of instructional programs (See Appendix A, Mid Cycle Report, appendix page 10). One of the metrics used to measure quality was an evaluation of the strength of program assessment plan. That evaluation was carried out by faculty teams that evaluated, using a rubric, five aspects of each program assessment plan: the intended learning outcomes, the methods of assessment, the findings from assessments, the implications and actions reported by the program, and the identified improvements. See http://president.boisestate.edu/prioritization/files/2014/09/B.-Program-Prioritization-Appendixes-to-Final-Report.pdf for rubrics. The following table depicts the percent of programs that were rated in each category of deficient, beginning, developing, and proficient for each of the five aspects of the plan.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summary of Program Assessment Report Rubric Ratings</th>
<th>Deficient</th>
<th>Beginning</th>
<th>Developing</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program Intended Learning Outcomes</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Findings</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications &amp; Actions</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvements</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PPP also evaluated the annual number of graduates (averaged over the last three years), both as one component of a set of metrics and as a basis for flagging programs with low productivity.

One important challenge will be to ensure that the measures used in PPP can be sustained. We plan to do so as follows:

- The Five-Year Review of Academic Departments process will be strengthened. The set of metrics supplied at the beginning of the process will be expanded and put in the context of (i) other departments at the university and (ii) peers from the Delaware Study, where appropriate. In addition, metrics will be subjected to a preliminary analysis to identify specific concerns to be addressed in the self-study, for example, low progress to graduation, low student satisfaction with the program and/or faculty, and weak assessment of program intended learning outcomes.

- Newly created programs will include a sunset clause: the program must produce graduates at or above a specified threshold; otherwise the program will be discontinued.

> Evaluation of Assessment Results and Resulting Actions:

In the Five-Year Review of Academic Departments process, no strict criteria are used to evaluate whether to call for actions by the department. Instead, it is up to the judgment of the external reviewers and of the dean’s/Provost’s Office as to whether a particular issue is concerning enough to be worthy of action. It should also be noted that reviewers often focus on areas of opportunity for departments, not only on areas of concern. Departments are required to develop an action plan to address concerns and areas of opportunity that were identified during the process. Several examples of actions that have resulted from the Five-Year Review of Academic Departments process are listed in the “department” section that follows.

In PPP, metrics were used to construct a score for each of the four criteria: relevance, quality, productivity, and efficiency. The combined criterion scores were then used to rank all programs, with the result that the 20% of programs in each college receiving the lowest scores were required to make
substantive changes to remedy whatever it was that caused them to be in that lowest quintile. The action plans for the lowest 20% are presently under review and each requires approval of the Provost. Additionally, programs within the middle 60% of scores were required to specify improvements that they could make, basing the resulting action plans on the measures used for evaluation; those plans are subject to dean’s approval. The following are examples of actions that are planned to remedy the challenges identified by PPP. All programs in the fifth quintile will be re-evaluated at the end of fiscal year 2017.

- Four programs will be discontinued and resources made available by those discontinuations will be reallocated to other programs.
- Eight programs must specifically improve their assessment of learning outcomes.
- Nine programs will be restructured by either adding an emphasis or option to attract more students, or consolidating programs in order to streamline the options for students and provide a more robust faculty.
- Three programs will restructure their curriculum to make it more efficient for students to progress through the program.
- Five programs will increase recruitment in order to increase enrollments and production of graduates, with specific targets established.

In evaluating the annual number of graduates during PPP, we determined levels of acceptability for the annual number of graduates. Departments with programs flagged for low number of graduates were required to develop action plans (which require Provost’s approval) to remedy the low number of graduates; the planned actions range from discontinuation to restructuring of curriculum to increased recruitment. Productivity of flagged programs will be reevaluated in summer of 2017. Several examples of actions that have resulted specifically from the flagging of low number of graduates are:

- BA French and BA German will adopt a recruiting strategy successfully employed at U of Rhode Island in which the majors were pitched as excellent *second* majors that would add strength to the portfolio of students already majoring in another subject, such as business.
- BS in Physics will revamp its curriculum to streamline it, making it comparable to peer institutions and more easily achievable. In addition, the department will offer all required courses each year (instead of offering some only every other year) and will add two emphases that will attract more students.

The evaluation, during PPP, of program assessment reports, will be used as a basis for improvement of subsequent plans. The Office of Institutional Research is in the process of hiring a part-time faculty associate who will be charged with providing targeted assistance and consultation to academic departments and programs in program level assessment planning, implementation, and continuous improvement of student learning. In addition, improvements to the report format and rubric are being made based on feedback garnered through PPP.

I.B.3 Academic Department-level Assessment of Mission Fulfillment

>Clarity of mission has resulted from the following:

During the Five-Year Review of Academic Departments process, departments are asked to address (as was described above for instructional programs) the way in which all aspects of department function contribute to the core themes and therefore the mission of the university; those aspects of function are: instructional programs, service coursework, research and creative activity, and community outreach and service. Through this process, we accomplish a reinforcement of the specifics of our core themes.

During Program Prioritization, academic departments were evaluated using a broader set of metrics than that used for instructional programs, including metrics regarding research, service, instructional
efficiency, progress to degree, etc. (see below). Our use of that set of metrics recognized the broad role of academic departments in contributing to the University’s mission, and made a first step and evaluating the effectiveness of departments in a systematic way.

Assessment of Performance has occurred by the following

In the Five-Year Review of Academic Departments process, as with instructional programs, evaluation of performance of departments has not been systematically quantitative, but instead has consisted of having external reviewers, deans, and/or the Provost’s Office look for areas of weakness or concern from their perspectives.

The set of metrics used during PPP to evaluate a department was extensive, and can be found at http://president.boisestate.edu/prioritization/files/2014/09/B.-Program-Prioritization-Appendixes-to-Final-Report.pdf, where they are organized by the functional aspect of the department addressed (instructional programs, instruction outside of instructional programs, research and creative activity, community outreach, and student support) and by the criteria of relevance, quality, productivity, and efficiency.

Evaluation of Assessment Results and Resulting Actions:

Several examples of actions that have resulted from the Five-Year Review of Academic Departments process are as follows:

- The Department of Anthropology moved research oriented faculty to a 2-2 teaching load through streamlining course offerings and collapsing existing programs.
- To optimize the natural synergies between the programs, the undergraduate Environmental Studies Program is aligning their program with the graduate program in Community and Regional Planning to support students who are interested in further study.
- Modern Languages and Literature restructured departmental governance to distribute the responsibilities and provide a more optimal structure for the department.

In PPP, the evaluation of metrics was done with two purposes in mind: provide context for the evaluation of instructional programs and identify areas in which action is warranted. To give some idea of the performance of each department relative to other departments at the university, departments were ranked, across the university, within each metric. The Provost identified two areas in which actions were required.

- Five academic departments are required to make changes that address causes of relatively low progress-to-degree. Potential actions include restructuring curriculum or dealing with bottleneck courses.
- Seven academic departments are required to make changes that address causes of instructional cost per credit hour that are relatively high at Boise State. Potential actions include reducing the number of class sections that are overly small or restructuring faculty workloads.
- One academic department is required to make changes that address both.

PPP also presented an opportunity to restructure colleges in order to better align with University initiatives and increase synergy among units. Two of the most substantial changes are as follows:

- A new School of Public Service, consisting of five departments from the College of Social Sciences and Public Affairs was created to increase alignment and synergy among those departments.
- The College of Health Sciences was expanded and restructuring by adding School of Social Work and the Department of Kinesiology, and by creating a School of Allied Health comprised of the departments of Kinesiology, Radiologic Sciences, Respiratory Care, and Community and Environmental Health.
One additional initiative resulting from PPP is the creation of the College of Innovation and Design, which has the purpose of facilitating the creation of new, transdisciplinary programs. It will do so by (i) directing the assignment of resources (funding and space) to programs that are transdisciplinary, (ii) providing an administrative home for tenure and sabbatical, as necessary, for those faculty members deeply involved in CID activities, and (iii) helping to develop and modify appropriate policies to better support faculty members who work across disciplines.

I.B.3 Administrative and Support Program-level Assessment of Mission Fulfillment

>Clarity of mission has resulted from the following:

There has been substantial focus on the contribution of programs to the university’s strategic plan, which is fairly closely aligned with the Core Themes, as part of two processes: (i) In the annual planning and budget process, units must address put any budget requests in terms of their contribution to the strategic plan. (ii) Strategic planning occurs at a number of scales below that of the entire university, from the unit level to the division level. There is typically tight alignment of those finer-scale plans with the university plan.

As part of PPP, we explicitly assessed alignment with and contribution to the mission, Core Themes, and strategic plan of each administrative and support program by evaluating essays addressing that alignment and contribution.

Also as part of PPP, the contribution and alignment of each program was assessed by evaluating each program on the four criteria of relevance, quality, productivity, and efficiency, with the idea that the more relevant, the higher quality, the more productive and efficient a program, the greater its overall contribution what the university is trying to achieve.

>Assessment of Performance has occurred by the following:

Prior to PPP, evaluation of the performance of administrative and support units was inconsistent across the university. Some programs have a long history of measurement of performance. However, many other programs have not systematically measured program performance.

With the advent of PPP, we have begun the process of ensuring that all administrative and support programs engage in systematic assessment of performance. During PPP, each administrative and support unit developed a set of metrics that could be used to assess performance. During the 2014-15 follow-up year, we are revisiting those sets of metrics to ensure that they provide the information necessary to know where changes are needed to improve performance.

>Evaluation of Assessment Results and Resulting Actions.

The metrics that had been developed, as well as other information gathered using a standardized questionnaire, were evaluated by a committee, which derived scores for each program. Programs were then ranked within each division, and divided into quintiles. Those programs in the bottom 20% of scores were required to propose actions for substantive change. The middle 60% were asked to propose improvements. Two examples of changes that resulted from PPP are:

- University Health Services will be moved from the Division of Student Affairs to the College of Health Sciences to align with the college’s academic programs and create teaching and research clinic opportunities. This will allow students to gain additional exposure to real world instructional situations and faculty members will be able to augment their instruction and research through actual practice within their professions.
- Research Computing will centralize services for support of research cyber infrastructure to maximize support for researchers. A central model of support is the emerging trend in higher
education research intensive institutions. The University is investing $132,500 to hire a research computing professional to provide greater support for research activity, including data analysis, visualization, and GIS support.

I.C. Validity of Core Themes and Objectives

Are our core themes and objectives still valid?

The four Core Themes and associated Core Objectives that were included in our Year One report have proved to be enduring and robust. One important measure of that robustness is that the four Core Themes align very well with the first four goals of our strategic plan, Focus on Effectiveness 2012-2017. However, two gaps have become evident. First, during PPP, it became evident that we do not have a Core Theme that (i) aligns with two of the criteria of PPP, productivity and efficiency and (ii) is aligned with the basic notion of PPP, which is that the institution should work to ensure that resources are best aligned with the mission. Furthermore, we do not have a Core Theme that corresponds to Goal #5 of our strategic plan: “Transform our operations to serve the contemporary mission of the university.” We believe that institutional productivity and efficiency are foundational to our ability to carry out our mission, and therefore we will consider development and adoption of a fifth Core Theme that is focused on responsible stewardship of resources.

Second, our core themes and objectives need additional focus on access and support for student from traditionally underrepresented groups. The Idaho State Board of Education is placing increased emphasis on the college completion rate in Idaho, and one of the most effective ways for Boise State to contribute to an increase in that rate is by focus on recruitment and support of student from groups traditionally underrepresented as college completers, which, in Idaho, includes Hispanics, rural residents, and non-traditional students.

I.D. Sufficiency of Evidence of Mission Fulfillment and Sustainability

Are we satisfied that the core themes and indicators selected are providing sufficient evidence to assess mission fulfillment and sustainability?

We are on the right path, but we have much work to do. First, a set of performance indicators has emerged as being the focus of substantial attention: (i) they members of the Core Themes KPMs and the KPIs of our strategic plan and strategic enrollment plan, (ii) they have been used as the basis for major initiatives at the university, and (iii) they are used by external ranking systems. Those Very Important Performance Indicators (VIPIs) are:

- Four- and 6-year graduation rate and first year retention rate: (i) the focus of a wide range of initiatives because of relatively poor performance on our part, (ii) the subject of one of the goals of our strategic plan and our strategic enrollment plan, and (iii) widely used in ratings (e.g., US News).
- Annual number of baccalaureate graduates: (i) an important focus of the SBOE, (ii) a driving force for many of our actions and budget requests.
- Annual number of doctoral graduates: (i) emblematic of our emergence as a doctoral institution, (ii) important to the Carnegie Foundation basic classification, and (iii) has been the focus of substantial actions on our part.
- Research expenditures: (i) emblematic of our emergence as a research institution, (ii) important to the Carnegie Foundation basic rating, and (iii) the focus of substantial actions on our part.
- Performance of students in mastering the University Learning Outcomes, which are (i) the basis for our Foundational Studies Program, which we regard as a signature experience for our
undergraduates, (ii) the focus of considerable attention in NWCCU standards as they relate to
the general education component of our undergraduate curriculum.

Second, we have quite a few additional KPIs/KPMs (Appendix F) that have varying degrees of overlap
among those used for our core themes and those used for other purposes. Work required is as follows:

- We need to simplify and focus the performance measures by culling those that are of secondary
  importance, organize them for clarity, and create alignment among the various sets of
  measures.
- We need to ensure our focused group of measures covers all the necessary aspects of our
  operations. For example, we need to incorporate a measure of success of underrepresented
  students.

Third, we need to strengthen KPIs (and create new ones as needed) that roll unit-level performance up
to the University-level. Examples are as follows:

- One existing KPI is the number of academic departments that have recently revised their
  assessment plans for program learning outcomes. Now that we’ve run those assessment plans
  through a rigorous evaluation process as part of PPP, we can enhance the KPI by adopting that
  PPP evaluation process to yield information on the actual strength of each assessment plan
  instead of simply relying on percent that have been revised.
- We need to develop one or more KPIs that quantify the degree to which administrative and
  support units are being effectively evaluated. A rudimentary KPI would consist of, perhaps, the
  number of units with current assessment plans. However, that is a “check the box” metric; a
  better one would include an evaluation of the strength of those plans.

Fourth, we need to consider additional KPIs that would result from an analysis of what sparks us to
action. For example, comments submitted by students as part of several surveys have emerged as
having the potential for substantial motivational power. Is there a KPI that can, perhaps, make use of
qualitative analysis of student comments to yield a measure of the pulse of student sentiment regarding
the university? Such “KPIs” might not involve quantification and the development of thresholds of
acceptability, but instead would be used to identify areas of concentrated dissatisfaction of students.

Fifth, as noted earlier, we need to ensure that we develop the mechanisms by which information from
KPIs are converted to action, for without such a mechanism we are simply measuring with no purpose.
One important step will be the development, for each KPI, of the threshold dividing acceptable from
unacceptable, where “unacceptable” is a call to action. Another step will be assigning the line of
responsibility for the response to the information yielded from KPIs.
Mid-cycle Evaluation Part II: Mission and Core themes to Objectives to Indicators to Outcomes to Mission Fulfillment

The institution will provide representative examples of how it has operationalized its mission and core themes progressing from objectives to indicators to outcomes to mission fulfillment. These examples should be from your core theme focused on student learning.

As you provide these examples please include analysis in regard to the following questions:

1. Are your indicators, for the selected examples, proving to be meaningful? Do you have too many indicators or too few?
2. What has the institution learned so far and what changes are contemplated? What has been your progress to date using the data? Do the data tell you what you are looking for?
3. How are data being collected, analyzed, and utilized and the findings communicated to constituents?

II.A. Introduction.

Two examples will be described in the following pages: (i) The Foundational Studies Program, which is Boise State’s general education curriculum and (ii) two academic programs, the BA in Spanish and the BA in Anthropology. Figure A on the following page illustrates (for a select set at each level) the connection of mission to core themes to objectives to indicators to performance measures that are related to the examples that will be used.

The set of indicators denoted by “A” represents the assessment plan of the University Learning Outcomes, which were identified in our Year One report as Core Theme Key Performance Measures. The set of indicators denoted by “B” represents the assessment plans for Program Learning Outcomes. We have recently conducted a comprehensive evaluation of the Program Assessment Plans for each of our instructional programs as part of Program Prioritization, and that initial assessment will form the basis for an ongoing process of evaluation and improvement of Program Assessment Plans, enabling us to use them as Key Performance Measures.

II.B. First Example: the Foundational Studies Program.

>Overview

The Foundational Studies Program (FSP) is Boise State’s general education program. Boise State’s prior general education curriculum, the “Core Curriculum” was implemented in 1981 and remained essentially unchanged for almost 30 years. Throughout 2009-2010, the Core Reform Task force developed a new program of general education, focused on specific outcomes and organized to provide students with a common, engaging educational experience. These new program learning objectives were inspired by the Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP), a national public advocacy, campus action, and research initiative that champions the importance of a twenty-first-century liberal education.

In the fall of 2009, in the midst of the work of the Core Reform Task Force, an NWCCU external review team emphasized the importance of updating the Core Curriculum. Following that review, the Core Reform Task Force completed development of the new program, the Foundational Studies Program (FSP), which was approved in October 2010 by the Faculty Senate. Full implementation of the program began in fall semester 2012.
Core Theme One: Undergraduate Education
Our university provides access to high quality undergraduate education that cultivates the personal and professional growth of our students and meets the educational needs of our community, state, and nation. We engage our students and focus on their success.

Core Objective 1.2: Relevance. Our undergraduate students develop depth and breadth in the skills, knowledge, and experiences required to ensure their success in the 21st century world.

Core Objective 1.3: Quality. In addition to developing depth of knowledge, understanding, and skill in their respective disciplines, our undergraduate students are engaged in an education that stresses the liberal arts. They master enduring skills and habits of mind that transcend disciplinary boundaries, achieve a breadth of knowledge and understanding over a range of disciplines, receive a solid grounding in civic and ethical responsibility, and become aware of the global community and their connection to it.

Assessment measures of achievement of ULO’s

% of departments reviewed with completed assessment processes

% of departments reviewed that update programs based on assessment feedback

Successful attainment of program learning goals as measured by department assessment structures

ULO’s for Foundational Studies Program are achieved

A coherent undergraduate experience includes in-depth disciplinary studies that integrate our Foundational Studies University Learning Objectives e.g.: critical inquiry, innovation, and writing and oral communication.

All departments implement program-level assessment to measure attainment of discipline-specific learning objectives. Assessment plans have appropriate measures that inform program improvement.

Our students master the ideas, ways of thinking, applications, and content of their disciplines.

Students achieve University Learning Objectives (ULO) of the Foundational Studies program, including critical inquiry, creativity, innovative thought, written & oral communication, problem solving, teamwork, ethics, and cultural diversity.

Figure A: Example of Core Themes to Objectives to Indicators to Performance Measures
The FSP provides a connected, multidisciplinary framework of learning from freshman to senior years. Courses incorporate teamwork and extend the educational experience beyond the classroom to include such areas as international studies, service-learning, internships, and participation in student government. The program is organized around eleven University Learning Objectives (ULO’s) that every Boise State graduate will be expected to have met, regardless of major. These objectives provide a framework of uniform assessment categories for departments and degree programs. The University Learning Objectives are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intellectual &amp; Civic &amp; Ethical Foundations</th>
<th>Foundational Studies Program University Learning Objectives</th>
<th>Cluster Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Write effectively in multiple contexts, for a variety of audiences.</td>
<td>1. Write effectively in multiple contexts, for a variety of audiences.</td>
<td>Writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Communicate effectively in speech, both as speaker and listener.</td>
<td>2. Communicate effectively in speech, both as speaker and listener.</td>
<td>Oral Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Engage in effective critical inquiry by defining problems, gathering and evaluating evidence, and determining the adequacy of argumentative discourse.</td>
<td>3. Engage in effective critical inquiry by defining problems, gathering and evaluating evidence, and determining the adequacy of argumentative discourse.</td>
<td>Critical Inquiry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Think creatively about complex problems in order to produce, evaluate, and implement innovative possible solutions, often as one member of a team.</td>
<td>4. Think creatively about complex problems in order to produce, evaluate, and implement innovative possible solutions, often as one member of a team.</td>
<td>Innovation &amp; Teamwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Analyze ethical issues in personal, professional, and civic life and produce reasoned evaluations of competing value systems and ethical claims.</td>
<td>5. Analyze ethical issues in personal, professional, and civic life and produce reasoned evaluations of competing value systems and ethical claims.</td>
<td>Ethics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Apply knowledge of cultural differences to matters of local, regional, national, and international importance, including political, economic, and environmental issues.</td>
<td>6. Apply knowledge of cultural differences to matters of local, regional, national, and international importance, including political, economic, and environmental issues.</td>
<td>Diversity &amp; Internationalization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Apply knowledge and the methods of reasoning characteristic of mathematics, statistics, and other formal systems to solve complex problems.</td>
<td>7. Apply knowledge and the methods of reasoning characteristic of mathematics, statistics, and other formal systems to solve complex problems.</td>
<td>Mathematics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Apply knowledge and the methods characteristic of scientific inquiry to think critically about and solve theoretical and practical problems about physical structures and processes.</td>
<td>8. Apply knowledge and the methods characteristic of scientific inquiry to think critically about and solve theoretical and practical problems about physical structures and processes.</td>
<td>Natural, Physical, and Applied Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Apply knowledge and methods characteristic of the visual and performing arts to explain and appreciate the significance of aesthetic products and creative activities.</td>
<td>9. Apply knowledge and methods characteristic of the visual and performing arts to explain and appreciate the significance of aesthetic products and creative activities.</td>
<td>Visual and Performing Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Apply knowledge and the methods of inquiry characteristic of literature and other humanities disciplines to interpret and produce texts expressive of the human condition.</td>
<td>10. Apply knowledge and the methods of inquiry characteristic of literature and other humanities disciplines to interpret and produce texts expressive of the human condition.</td>
<td>Literature and Humanities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Apply knowledge and the methods of inquiry characteristic of the social sciences to explain and evaluate human behavior and institutions.</td>
<td>11. Apply knowledge and the methods of inquiry characteristic of the social sciences to explain and evaluate human behavior and institutions.</td>
<td>Social Sciences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following Foundational Studies courses are central to the program.

1. First Year Writing (ENGL 101 and ENGL 102) is a two-semester sequence for a total of six credits. Coordinated by the English Department’s First Year Writing Program, the courses provide an introduction to university expectations about academic writing and research. (ULO 1)
2. Intellectual Foundations (University Foundations [UF] 100) is a first year seminar that provides an “intellectual orientation” to university-level learning, inquiry, and innovation. (ULOs 2, 3, 4)
3. Civic and Ethical Foundations (UF200) focuses on analyzing ethical issues and applying knowledge of cultural differences. (ULOs 1, 5, 6)
4. For students that transfer into Boise State and are core certified from their prior institution, Transitional Foundations (UF300) integrates the learning objectives supported by UF100 and UF200 with higher achievement expectations, and counts as 3 credits toward the upper-division credits requirement. (ULOs 1-6)
5. Disciplinary Lens courses will provide a familiarity with the multiple perspectives necessary to be broadly educated and to begin gaining a complete “picture” of the human condition and the world that we inhabit. Students will be required to complete classes across the 5 disciplinary lens areas of
Mathematics, Natural & Physical Sciences, Visual and Performing Arts, Literature and Humanities and Social Sciences. These courses resemble the courses that populate the current Core curriculum in that their content and methodology are typically situated within the discipline of the department offering the course. (relevant ULOs 7, 8, 9, 10, 11)

6. Communication in the Discipline (CID) courses focus on written and oral communication as they are practiced within the discipline. (ULOs 1, 2)

7. Finishing Foundations (FF400) is a 1-3 credit, culminating experience offered within the major department. (ULOs 3,4 and either 1 or 2)

>Assessment Plan

The goal of the ULO Assessment Plan is to provide course and category (e.g. DLL, DLM) level learning outcomes assessment reporting in such a way that the university can inform decisions about course alignment, content, and pedagogy with the intention of supporting stronger learning gains within the undergraduate student population. Important assumptions guiding the plan include:

- Assessment is part of teaching and learning
- Assessment that is authentic (connected to) the course is most effective
- Assessment should not be conducted for the sole purpose of satisfying external regulators.
- Assessment that is generative for faculty and students will satisfy external.

Periodic Assessment of all ULOs will occur over 4 year cycle

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 1 Assessment Group</th>
<th>Oral Communication (2)</th>
<th>DL Visual &amp; Performing Arts (9)</th>
<th>DL Literature and Humanities (10)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year 2 Assessment Group</td>
<td>Diversity (6)</td>
<td>DL Social Science (11)</td>
<td>Ethics (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 3 Assessment Group</td>
<td>Critical Inquiry (3)</td>
<td>DL Mathematics (7)</td>
<td>DL Natural, Physical, Applied Science (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 4 Assessment Group</td>
<td>Writing (1)</td>
<td>Teamwork/Innovation (4)</td>
<td>Review of Assessment Process</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first year ULOs 2, 9, and 10 were chosen because we are already assessing Oral Communication in UF 100 and 300. The faculty teaching CID courses can be added in 2014-15. DLV is a small category and most of the courses are similar in size and structure (large lecture classes). DLL includes two disciplines that have been working on and thinking about assessment for some time (World Languages and English) and most of the courses use writing as a mode for instruction.

The second year inclusion of ULOs 5 & 6 in conjunction with ULO 11 (Social Sciences) brings together issues of culture and difference shared across all the ULOs, albeit in very different ways. ULOs 5 & 6 are assessed annually in UF 200 and 300.

The third year adds ULO’s 3, 7, and 8. We have been assessing all three of these ULOs in smaller ways. ULO 3 is assessed annually in UF 100 and 300. ULOs 7 and 8 have been assessed in DL courses for STEM majors through an NSF funded research project, CALIPER.

The fourth year includes ULO 1 and 4 (Teamwork & Innovation). Again, both have been assessed elsewhere annually in UF 100, 300, and in the First Year Writing Program. We will be adding assessment from CIDs and FF courses to those ongoing assessment efforts. The FFs will have had time to get up and running and the e-Portfolio system should be fully integrated by this time.

| Timeline | ULOs 2, 9, 10 | ULOs 5, 6, 11 | ULOs 3, 7, 8 | ULOs 1, 4 |

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### Assessment Phases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Phase 1</th>
<th>Phase 2</th>
<th>Phase 3</th>
<th>Phase 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014-15</td>
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<td>2015-16</td>
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<td>2019-20</td>
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<td>2020-21</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Assessment Phases are as follows:
- **Phase 1**: Active Assessment
- **Phase 2**: Distribution and Development
- **Phase 3**: Implementation
- **Phase 4**: Maintenance and Revision


- Appendix B (page 33) covers University Foundations 100.
- Appendix D (Page 40) covers University Foundations 200.
- Appendix E (Page 45) covers University Foundations 300.
- Appendix F (Page 48) covers Disciplinary Lens Mathematics and Disciplinary Lens Natural Sciences courses.

### Wrap-up for First Example

Are your indicators, for the selected examples, proving to be meaningful? Do you have too many indicators or too few?

In our Year One report, we identified two simple Key Performance Measures related to Example One: “Assessment measures of achievement of ULOs” and “ULO’s for Foundational Studies Program are achieved.” Those measures were developed early in the implementation of the Foundational Studies Program and therefore lacked detail and any sort of threshold of acceptability. We subsequently developed KPIs for our strategic plan that did offer more detail: “% of students achieving Civic & Ethical Foundations ULOs,” “% of students achieving Critical inquiry, innovation, teamwork ULOs,” and “% of students achieving Written & oral communication ULOs.” We also stated that our target for these three measures is that 90% of graduates would achieve either “exemplary” or “good” for each ULO.

As we move towards Year Seven, we will adopt the more detailed KPIs of our strategic plan as well as similar thresholds of acceptability. As we fully implement the assessment plan above, we will develop additional Key Performance Measures as needed.

What has the institution learned so far and what changes are contemplated? What has been your progress to date using the data? Do the data tell you what you are looking for?

Early feedback from students is that they found it challenging to see a connection between the plenary and discussion group sections of UF100. As a result, the focus for this course for 2014-15 has been to enhance students’ engagement in the class through critical inquiry. A second notable enhancement in the courses was the development of weekly assignments designed to guide students to “pull” content from the plenary into the discussion groups or vice versa. For UF200 overall findings indicated that student scores are less proficient than the goal in three areas. Faculty has met to revise the criteria or the curriculum as appropriate to support the learning outcomes. Assessment of UF300 indicated that more “real world” application was warranted, resulting in a course redesign in the summer of 2014.
The data gathered from students, faculty and other support is providing useful, actionable information.  

*How are data being collected, analyzed, and utilized and the findings communicated to constituents?*

The data is being collected through a planned process where faculty who teach the course submit student generated artifacts that are evaluated by a committee of faculty members involved in those courses.

The data is utilized to adjust the courses as needed.

Findings are communicated through the Foundational Studies Program Annual Report. Issue specific information for faculty and advisors is developed and disseminated as needed. A Foundational Studies Program e-Newsletter is being developed with plans to be distributed 2-3 times a year.

**II.C. Example Two: Program Learning Outcomes (PLO) Assessment, Integration of PLO and ULO assessment, and e-Portfolios**

*Overview*

Historically, Boise State has pursued a bottom-up, internally-motivated model of Program Learning Outcome (PLO) assessment that has made use of central support where needed and has integrated assessment into other university processes, such as Five-Year Review of Academic Departments and Program Prioritization. We have not pursued a top-down, externally-motivated, highly-regulated, highly-standardized model. Our bottom-up model, although not yielding an appearance of highly consistent assessment across programs, creates organic assessment processes that are fully owned by the faculty and that occur for the primary purpose of enhancing student learning. Top down models tend to put too much emphasis on appearance of compliance instead of on the substance of ensuring and improving learning.

Presently, all degree programs have stated PLOs, have structured plans for assessing PLOs, and are making use of information from that assessment for improvement of curricula, etc. We are, therefore, in compliance with NWCCU standards.

The University is poised, however, to take a major step in further strengthening overall assessment of PLOs: the integration of assessment of PLOs with the assessment of ULOs. At the core of this integration are the following: First, the university is adopting e-Portfolio software that will enable assessment of ULOs and PLOs using the same basic structure and processes. Second, the Foundational Studies Program includes in its curriculum two courses that are fully embedded within the curriculum of undergraduate degree programs: the Communication in the Discipline course and the Finishing Foundations course. We will describe each, and then use case studies to illustrate.

*e-Portfolios*

Boise State has established “Digication” software as the e-Portfolio platform as the vehicle we will use to document and evaluate the achievement of the ULOs and to facilitate student learning via the reflection process inherent in e-portfolio development. Described above in “Example One” is process that has been developed to assess ULOs; that process will include the collection of data, analysis of data, review of findings, and integration of faculty development to address those findings. The assessment plan relies on regular, comprehensive collection (via Digication) of evidence of student learning for evaluation, reflection, and ultimately, improvement in student learning based on actions identified through the assessment process.

We have begun the process. ULO rubrics have been loaded into the Digication to facilitate assessment. Freshmen writing courses (ENGL 101, 102, and 112) assessed ULO 1 (write effectively) via e-Portfolios.
During spring 2014, University Foundations 300 assessed ULOs 3, 5, 6 (engage in critical inquiry, analyze ethical issues, and apply knowledge of cultural differences) via e-Portfolios this spring. The URL for the site introducing faculty and staff to e-Portfolios is http://academics.boisestate.edu/fsp/foundational-studies-program/eportfolios/.

Along with the thoughtfully redesigned curriculum, ULOs, and associated rubrics, the e-Portfolio provides both the philosophy and the tool for evidence-based assessment of student learning. It in our plan to exploit our e-Portfolio software in three primary uses, as shown in Figure 2: ULOs, PLOs, and co-curricular activities. We are also exploring its potential use for the awarding and documenting of “badges” and for assessment of prior learning experiences.

Also illustrated in Figure 2 is the breadth of support that we will provide to assessment usage: faculty development and pedagogical integration, assessment facilitation and reporting, technical support, and overall management of the system.

>Integration of Assessment of PLOs with that of ULOs

In the curriculum of every undergraduate degree program are two courses that are shared between the Foundational Studies Program and the major degree program. The Communication in the Discipline (CID) course is typically a sophomore- or junior-level course in the major department designed to extend students’ experience with ULO’s 1 and 2 (writing, oral communication) beyond freshman writing by focusing written and oral communication as they are practiced within the discipline. The Finishing Foundations (FF) course is a culminating experience offered within the major department that supports ULO’s 3 and 4 (critical inquiry, teamwork/innovation), and either 1 or 2 (writing, oral communication). Interdisciplinary research, team teaching, and community-based projects are highly desirable, where applicable, in the Finishing Foundations course.

The ULOs within each CID and FF course will be assessed using e-Portfolios. We have taken the initial steps in that direction by creating course design tables with the following headings:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Foundational Studies ULO Criteria and Notions of Exemplary Work</th>
<th>Course Learning Outcomes (“by the end of the course, each student should be able to…”)</th>
<th>Assessment Method: Evidence of Student Learning</th>
<th>Planned Teaching and Learning Activities/Pedagogy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

A complete compilation of these course evaluation tables may be found at http://academics.boisestate.edu/fsp/a-learning-foundation-for-your-degree-learning-outcomes/cid-ff-cdt/.

The CID and FF courses of a particular major are taken by all students in that major. Given our intention for strong integration of ULOs and PLOs, e-Portfolios have the potential to be leveraged for widespread assessment of learning. In other words, e-Portfolios used for assessment in CID and FF can also be used for PLO assessment by the departments. We are in the midst of hiring a part-time faculty associate who will be charged with providing assistance and consultation to academic departments and programs in
program level assessment planning, implementation, and continuous improvement of student learning. One important aspect of that job will be supporting the assessment of PLOs using e-Portfolios.

A necessary part of the integration of PLO and ULO assessment will be the updating of curriculum maps for each program to ensure that course learning objectives align with PLOs and ULOs. One aspect of curriculum mapping is shown in Appendix G, which depicts the mapping of ULOs to Program Learning Outcomes as defined by the accreditation standards of ABET. Another aspect is depicted in the course evaluation tables referred to immediately above.

>Case Study One: BA in Spanish

The PLOs and assessment plan for the BA in Spanish, as posted on our website, may be found at: http://academics.boisestate.edu/provost/files/2009/01/baspanish.pdf. During the Program Prioritization Process, the Department of World Languages submitted an updated set of PLOs as well as an updated assessment plan and findings, to be evaluated as one measure of program quality; that document may be found in Appendix H, Mid Cycle Report appendix page 101. The course design tables that connect ULOs to course learning objectives for the CID and FF courses may be found at http://academics.boisestate.edu/fsp/files/2013/08/SPANISH313.pdf and http://academics.boisestate.edu/fsp/files/2013/08/SPANISH498.pdf, respectively.

The Department of World Languages is now beginning the adoption of e-Portfolios for assessing PLOs. During the fall 2013 semester, students in all upper-division Spanish courses began submitting end-of-semester reflection videos via Digication. These videos allow instructors to assess PLO #1 "Speak Spanish with proficiency" and, depending on the course, other PLOs such as #5 "Demonstrate knowledge about the development of Spanish-speaking cultures," and #7 "Explain one's own cultural perspectives and provide comparisons to those of the target cultures." These videos include a meta-cognitive component whereby students are asked to: 1. Reflect upon significant/surprising elements of the course content 2. Make connections between what they have learned in a particular course and what they have learned in other courses (Spanish or otherwise), and 3. Discuss learning goals for future semesters and strategies for achieving those goals. In fall 2014 Spanish faculty will meet with Foundational Studies administrators to discuss future plans for assessing other PLOs using the Digication platform.

>Case Study Two: BA in Anthropology

The PLOs and assessment plan for the BA in Anthropology, as posted on our website, may be found at: http://academics.boisestate.edu/provost/files/2009/01/ba-anthropology.pdf. During the Program Prioritization Process, the Department of Anthropology submitted an updated set of PLOs as well as an updated assessment plan and findings, to be evaluated as one measure of program quality; that document may be found in Appendix I, Mid Cycle Report appendix page 107. A document that will serve as the basis for the course design table connecting ULOs to course learning objectives for the CID courses may be found at http://academics.boisestate.edu/fsp/files/2013/09/ANTH314.pdf. The course design table for the FF course is at http://academics.boisestate.edu/fsp/files/2013/08/ANTH492.pdf.

The Department of Anthropology is now beginning the adoption of e-Portfolios for assessing PLOs. The department began formally assessing program-learning objectives in the senior portfolio in 2005 based on paper/3-ring binder portfolios showcasing students’ best academic work, other learning experiences (field schools, internships, etc.), professional development materials including a resume, cv, letter of query, and statement of purpose. A term-paper rewrite in a team-editorial environment was added in 2012, as the course became FF course for the major. Beginning in Fall 2014, the department began to use the e-Portfolio platform with integrated assessment rubrics to streamline the assessment of BA in Anthropology PLOs and ULOs 1, 3, and 4. Importantly, e-Portfolios provides a benefit to students by
giving them a contemporary, easily sharable product that highlights the skills and experiences that make them unique and capable contributors to society.

>Wrap-up for Second Example

Are your indicators, for the selected examples, proving to be meaningful? Do you have too many indicators or too few?

In our Year One report, we listed three performance measures that would, supposedly, measure the strength of assessment of our PLOs:

- % of departments reviewed that update programs based on assessment feedback
- % of departments reviewed with completed assessment processes
- Successful attainment of program learning goals as measured by department assessment structures.

Those measures, however, were developed before our Foundational Studies Program was implemented, before we had decided to use e-Portfolios as our primary method of assessing ULOs, before we had begun integrating the assessment of PLOs with the assessment of ULOs, and before we had gone through the Program Prioritization process in which assessment plans were evaluated by faculty teams using rubrics. Furthermore, the first two of the above measures encourage the practice of simply “checking the box” to be able to be counted as opposed to ensuring that meaningful assessment is taking place. Therefore, as we move forward, with the integration of PLO and ULO assessment using e-Portfolios and in the aftermath of Program Prioritization, we need to revise our measures. The following are tentative measures:

- Successful attainment of program learning goals as measured by department assessment structures (retained from above; will need to be some sort of compiled measure for all departments).
- Percent of degree programs that have successfully integrated assessment of PLOs with assessment of ULOs.
- Rubric scores from evaluation of Program Assessment Plans.

What has the institution learned so far and what changes are contemplated? What has been your progress to date using the data? Do the data tell you what you are looking for?

It is too early to have learned from the implementation described above. We will, however, need to ensure that we integrate these measures into expectations for programs and departments and that there are processes in place to appropriately manage and measure our progress in these areas.

How are data being collected, analyzed, and utilized and the findings communicated to constituents?

Data gathering, collection, utilization, and communication are all part of what needs to be developed.
Mid-cycle Evaluation Part III: To-do List for Year Seven Success

In light of your analysis in Part I of your overall assessment plan and in light of your analysis of the representative examples you provided in Part II please respond to the following question:

- Moving forward to the Year Seven what will you need to do?

Our analysis of Part I and Part II above yields the following list of actions that will facilitate our success in our Year 7 Comprehensive Review:

1. We need to incorporate the ideas of productivity, efficiency, and responsible use of resources either into a new “Stewardship of Resources” core theme and/or into an objective of each existing core theme, such as “Productivity and Efficiency.” Along the same lines, we will need to develop appropriate indicators to show our success in stewarding resources. Appendix J presents already-existing KPIs that might be used for the new Core Theme.

2. Because of the increased emphasis of the SBOE on increasing the number of college graduates in Idaho, we need to strengthen the wording pertaining to access by and impact on students from Idaho, especially those from underrepresented groups (i.e., low socioeconomic status, first generation status, Hispanic, rural). Increasing the number of Idaho students from underrepresented groups who complete college will have substantially more impact on Idaho’s college completion rate than recruiting students who would have gone to and completed college anyway.

3. We need to do substantial work on our Key Performance Measures:
   A. They need to be culled.
   B. They need to be aligned with those from our strategic plan and strategic enrollment plan.
   C. For each, we need to erect thresholds of acceptability to indicate mission fulfillment.

4. We need to work with the staff of the SBOE to have the SBOE pay attention to our core theme indicators instead of focusing only on measures for our strategic plan and performance measures.

5. We will consider modifying two of our measures, graduation rate and retention rate, so that they would have two components each: (i) Each would continue to be cast as the actual rate, and (ii) Each would be depicted as a number relative to that predicted for our student body. There are two reasons for adding the second aspect of these measures. First, our student body is changing over time, making it difficult to know the degree to which any changes in retention and graduation rates are a result of our actions or a result of the change in student make up. Second, the second component helps avoid “teaching to the test” by trying to affect our graduation and retention rates by changing who we admit to the university instead of by doing the work necessary to make our students more successful.

6. There is work that needs to be done to create the structures that will sustain the value we have accrued from PPP.
   A. Incorporation of metrics into Five-Year Review of Academic Departments for instructional programs and academic departments.
   B. Creation of structure for ongoing assessment of Administrative & Support programs, including the revision of metrics and actions, a timing structure, and a process for reporting progress to the SBOE.
   C. A potential model for an assessment review structure is depicted in Appendix K.
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