



NOTRE DAME  
OF MARYLAND  
UNIVERSITY

## Institutional Assessment Plan

### Introduction

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#### Context and Goals

This document describes and defines the annual assessment process at Notre Dame of Maryland University (NDMU) in terms of assessment of institutional effectiveness, assessment of student learning outcomes, and achievement of strategic goals and outcomes. Assessment at NDMU occurs across campus, in every unit and program on campus, and during each academic and calendar year. Beginning at the course or unit level, assessment builds on foundational activities at the base of the assessment pyramid and moves up through departments and programs, to schools and divisions, to an overall institutional assessment. In this context, the University engages in assessment of student learning outcomes in the major and co-curricular activities, assessment of general education competencies across all departments and programs, and assessment of institutional effectiveness.

The annual assessment process at NDMU is built from the mission, vision, strategic priorities, and goals that inform the work of the institution and the outcomes that demonstrate the effectiveness and success of that work. Guided by strategic goals, school and division goals, program and unit goals, and course-level goals, the NDMU assessment process has the following goals:

1. Implement comprehensive, systematic, and sustainable assessment at all levels of the institution.
2. Review and provide feedback on assessment plans and reports from all units across the institution.
3. Prepare an annual institutional assessment report demonstrating through evidence the collection of assessment data, the use of those data to improve student learning and

institutional effectiveness, the data-informed allocation of resources, and assessment-based decision making.

4. Provide a framework for the work of the University Assessment Committee and its subcommittees to direct, respond to and improve the campus wide assessment process.
5. Serve as a resource for key stakeholders to engage in best practice in assessment within their own units, programs, and divisions.
6. Create a structure and process for assessment, improving, and reporting back on the successful accomplishment of strategic goals.

## Accreditation

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### Accreditation

Notre Dame of Maryland University (NDMU) offers a wide range of undergraduate and graduate programs in the arts & sciences, education, nursing, and pharmacy, and is accredited by the Middle States Association of Higher Education and by the Maryland State Department of Education. NDMU accreditation was reaffirmed following submission of the Periodic Review Report to Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) in 2011. The next accreditation visit is in 2017.

Notre Dame's School of Pharmacy was granted full accreditation status by the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE), the official accrediting body of professional degree programs in pharmacy at U.S. colleges and universities, in July 2015.

Notre Dame's School of Education was granted full reaccreditation by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education in 2013 and is scheduled for reaccreditation by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) in 2020.

Notre Dame's School of Nursing Entry Level BSN program, RN to BSN program and the MSN program are accredited by the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN). A substantive change proposal to include the entry level BSN program in the existing ACEN accreditation was submitted to ACEN, and the program was approved after a focused visit in spring 2014. The MSN program was re-accredited for eight years following a visit in spring 2014. The undergraduate nursing program is scheduled for reaccreditation in spring 2017 and the graduate program is scheduled for reaccreditation in spring 2022.

The University holds memberships in the American Association of University Professors, American Association of University Women, Association of American Colleges and Universities, American Council on Education, Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities, Pennsylvania Athletic Conference, Council for Higher Education Accreditation, Council of Independent Colleges, Independent College Fund of Maryland, Maryland Association for Higher Education,

Maryland Independent College and University Association, Maryland Higher Education Commission, Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, Inc., National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, National Catholic Educational Association, Public Leadership Education Network (PLEN), The College Board and the Women’s College Coalition, Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP).

## Vision, Mission, and Strategic Priorities

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### Vision

Notre Dame is dedicated to transforming the world, one well-educated and empowered student at a time. For over one hundred years, Notre Dame has offered exceptional educational opportunities, with a special commitment to women. In our next decade, we will be a recognized national leader and global partner in advancing the education of women.

### Mission

Notre Dame of Maryland University educates women as leaders to transform the world. Embracing the vision of the founders, the School Sisters of Notre Dame, the University provides a liberal arts education in the Catholic tradition. Distinctive undergraduate and graduate programs challenge women and men to strive for intellectual and professional excellence, to build inclusive communities, to engage in service to others, and to promote social responsibility.

### Strategic Priorities

#### Promote Catholic Identity, SSND Charism & Lifelong Service

- Create a vibrant, active faith community to infuse Catholic identity into NDMU life and support spirituality
- Infuse concepts of SSND Charism into NDMU life
- Build commitment to service

#### Advance Transformative Education

- Enhance academic programming
- Explore women & social entrepreneurship as a distinctive focus for University programming
- Enrich professional development
- Enhance leadership education opportunities for all students University-wide

### **Enhance Student Engagement: Create Distinctive Student Opportunities**

- Cultivate vibrant campus culture
- Empower and prepare students for personal and professional success and healthy lifestyle
- Cultivate citizenship
- Increase competitiveness of Athletics program
- Provide students with opportunities to develop connectedness, empowerment in relationships, and respect for diversity
- Seek and obtain Carnegie Classification of Civic Engagement in 2017.

### **Ensure Institutional Effectiveness & Enrollment Growth:**

#### ***Advancement, Enrollment & Marketing***

- Increase enrollment/strengthen enrollment processes
- Enhance marketing presence
- Create a culture of philanthropic excellence

### **Ensure Institutional Effectiveness & Enrollment Growth:**

#### ***Finance, Facilities, IT and Sustainability***

- Develop and implement plans/procedures to improve our environmental, risk management and public safety efforts
- Strengthen and improve the Accounting & Finance Function
- Develop and resource a comprehensive plan to improve existing facilities.
- Refresh technology infrastructure to support new and soon-coming campus needs.
- Enrich teaching/learning and student-facing environments

### **Expand Community and Global Partnerships**

- Expand local and regional partnership arrangements to increase enrollment and enhance NDMU's reputation for civic engagement
- Enhance connections to national and international entities to enrich student learning and service experiences
- Strengthen campus-wide internationalization
- Leverage the resources of the Baltimore /Washington DC region to enrich the living and learning experiences of NDMU students.
- Strengthen local and regional partnerships to provide enhanced faculty and staff development opportunities and to build University capacity
- Become the acknowledged local leader in the education and advancement of women

## Institutional Student Learning Outcomes

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***Refinement of a personal value system:*** Students will demonstrate a capacity for mature ethical judgments consistent with the Christian tradition.

***Integration of the arts and sciences:*** Students will show evidence of the ability to process and integrate learning from the arts and sciences in a variety of personal and academic endeavors.

***Development of a global perspective:*** Students will give evidence of global, cross-cultural and gender-sensitive awareness and attitudes.

***Growth in critical thinking abilities:*** Students will demonstrate higher level critical thinking skills through the process of gathering, selecting, analyzing, synthesizing, evaluating and applying information and knowledge.

***Enhancement of communication skills:*** Students will demonstrate oral (listening and speaking), written (focusing on content, style, structure and presentation) and visual (producing and/or critiquing images) literacy.

## Assessment Process

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### Overview

NDMU is committed to continuous improvement in all aspects of the university. Assessment at NDMU occurs at all levels: individual, class, course, program, department, office, unit, division, and university. Taken together, results of assessment from all levels inform the NDMU processes for ensuring and enhancing quality of student learning as well as university practice and function. Assessment drives budget and resource allocation decisions, and is linked to institutional mission and strategic priorities.

NDMU is student-focused; much attention is paid to understanding and improving all aspects of student experiences. In the realm of student learning, NDMU regularly assesses development and demonstration of skills, knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors required within specific majors and programs. Direct assessment sources include course-based work and external benchmark exams; indirect sources include indicators from student life activities, service learning, internship experiences, and study abroad opportunities. NDMU also collects information from career and graduate school contexts after students graduate. Students share their perceptions of coursework, teaching, advising and student life. Including these elements gives students voice in improving their own academic and co-curricular experiences, and shapes the experiences of future NDMU students.

NDMU also assesses institutional effectiveness outcomes in all non-academic and service-related units across campus. Through this process, administrative support areas are able to measure their performance against internally-established objectives and externally through benchmarks found at peer institutions. Assessment of supervision and institutional policy and practice support internal process improvement, which in turn, improves the overall campus experience.

## **University Assessment Committee**

The University Assessment Committee (UAC), with representatives from all major units on campus, will meet monthly to oversee, direct, and coordinate the University Assessment process, which includes the assessment of student learning and the assessment of institutional effectiveness. The UAC will develop and implement a formal University-wide Assessment Plan; supervise the administration of that plan; assure the link among planning, budgeting, resource allocation, and assessment; review assessment subcommittee feedback on department and unit assessment reports; follow up to ensure improvements are made based on assessment data; and identify and facilitate University development and training on key issues in assessment practice. UAC subcommittees, which will meet as needed during the annual assessment cycle, will provide support, feedback, and information to University Assessment Committee representatives; review and provide feedback on the annual assessment reports submitted within their area; and make actionable recommendations to the UAC for follow up and reporting. The UAC will produce and update an annual assessment report that will highlight assessment results and the use of those results for planning, budgeting, resource allocation, and improvement.

## **UAC Subcommittee Descriptions and Charge**

The Academic Assessment Subcommittee (AASC) will be comprised of at least two UAC Academic Affairs representatives and one additional member from each academic school. The AASC will supervise the submission of annual academic department assessment reports, provide feedback on the assessment methods and process used to generate data and information contained in those reports, serve as consultants and advisors to academic departments seeking assistance with University assessment requirements, and provide a conduit for the flow of information between the academic departments and the UAC.

The General Education Assessment Subcommittee (GESC) will be comprised of at least two UAC Academic Affairs representatives and four additional members from those departments most actively engaged in the design, delivery, and assessment of general education courses. The GESC will supervise the submission of annual general education assessment reports, provide

feedback on the assessment methods and process used to generate data and information contained in those reports, serve as consultants and advisors on the assessment of general education at the University, and provide a conduit for the flow of information between the departments and faculty engaged in general education instruction and the UAC.

The Student Life Assessment Subcommittee (SLSC) will be comprised of at least two UAC Student Life representatives and four additional members from the Student Life areas. The SLSC will supervise the submission of annual student life assessment reports, provide feedback on the assessment methods and process used to generate data and information contained in those reports, serve as consultants and advisors with the assessment of general education at the University, and provide a conduit for the flow of information between the student life areas and the UAC.

The Non-Academic Unit Assessment Subcommittee (NASC) will be comprised of at least two UAC Non-Academic Unit representatives and four additional members for the non-academic areas. The NASC will supervise the submission of annual non-academic unit assessment reports, provide feedback on the assessment methods and process used to generate data and information contained in those reports, serve as consultants and advisors to non-academic units seeking assistance with University assessment requirements, and provide a conduit for the flow of information between the non-academic units and the UAC.

## **Assessment of Institutional Effectiveness**

Assessment of Institutional Effectiveness at NDMU is based on the Mission, Vision, Strategic Goals, and Strategic Plan. Stemming from the NDMU mission of educating leaders to transform the world, institutional effectiveness derives from the accomplishment of strategic goals that impact each of the five divisions of the University: Academic Affairs, Enrollment Management, Finance and Administration, Institutional Advancement, and Student Life. A University-wide dashboard and system of strategic indicators couple with individualized program-based assessment across all areas to provide a comprehensive and ongoing foundation to assess, analyze, understand, and improve the University's performance and impact. Nationally standardized and locally developed survey and testing instruments also inform the program/unit based assessment to provide a comprehensive and complete picture of effectiveness at the institutional level.

Assessment of institutional effectiveness is measured through the strategic dashboard indicators, annualized division-level assessment reports, and institution-wide survey and testing results. The Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness generates benchmark data and coordinates the distribution of and response to these data. Dashboard indicators are reviewed quarterly and annually at each level of the institution, from the program and unit level, to the school and director level, to the division and institutional level using strategic priorities and

indicators as benchmarks against which these indicators are measured. Results are used to inform institution level decision-making, resource allocation, and improvement.

Additionally, school and division-wide annual assessment reports are prepared using individual department and program assessment data and results, and measured against school and division strategic priorities and goals using dashboard indicators and benchmark data. Analyses and results are used to inform division and school level decision making, resource allocation, and improvement. Each non-academic unit (Enrollment Management, Finance and Administration, and Institutional Advancement) prepares and implements an annual assessment plan, collects and analyzes assessment data, and uses results for improvement and resource allocation requests. Unit results are submitted to University Assessment Committee Non-Academic Unit Assessment Subcommittee for review and feedback using a standardized rubric based on assessment reporting requirements, and to the Vice President for each of the non-academic divisions. Each Vice President prepares an annual assessment report based on results and recommendations from each of the individual units in the division. The Non-Academic Unit Assessment Subcommittee of UAC reviews the division level reports and provides feedback using the standardized rubric.

Finally, and coupled with dashboard data and strategic indicators, as well as school and division level results and reports, institution-wide instruments to assess student learning, stakeholder satisfaction, and institutional performance are administered on a multi-year cycle, with results, trends, and performance against benchmarks used to assess progress against strategic priorities, to inform decision-making and resource allocation, and to continuously improve institutional performance and effectiveness.

## **Assessment of Student Learning**

Assessment of student learning occurs primarily in the divisions of Academic Affairs and Student Life. Annual assessment of student learning binds course- and program-level goals and outcomes to department-, school-, and unit-level goals and outcomes. These goals and outcomes are then attached to division goals and outcomes, and, finally, to institution-wide outcomes for student learning. Programmatic assessment and general education assessment provide the primary vehicles.

Each academic and student life unit develops an annual assessment plan from program goals and outcomes specific to each unit, and then submits an assessment report at the end of each year. Unit priorities link to school, division, and university-wide strategic priorities. Data collected by the academic and student life units measure anticipated outcomes to inform assessment of overall school and division goals and outcomes. The results of these assessments shape decisions at higher levels, justify resource requests during annual budget reviews, and provide evidence of progress toward fulfilling NDMU strategic plans. Each department and program analyzes its own results in order to identify, shape, and implement improvements to factors that impact student learning, such as curriculum,



pedagogy, content, program development and delivery, and support services. Improvements are also measured against program, school, and division goals, and assessed using the timeline and parameters of each unit assessment plan. Results are analyzed and reported through the NDMU annual assessment process.

In Academic Affairs, departments submit annual assessment reports to the deans and to the school-level assessment committees. The school-level assessment committees score reports against a common university rubric and provide detailed feedback to each academic unit. Each school also produces a consolidated report that is forwarded to the dean, to the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, and to the University Assessment Committee Academic Affairs Subcommittee. The subcommittee develops a summary report for the Division of Academic Affairs based on the school level reports.

In Student Life, annual assessment reports follow a similar path, and are submitted from the student life units to the division-level assessment committees. These committees develop division-wide assessment reports and forward them to the Vice President for Student Life and to the University Assessment Committee for review against the common university rubric. The subcommittee develops a summary report for the Division of Student Life based on the school level reports.

## **Assessment of General Education**

Assessment of general education at NDMU occurs annually and in the context of the overarching student learning outcomes for the university and the competency requirements of the general education curriculum. The General Education Assessment subcommittee works to align the learning outcomes of general education courses with the overarching institutional learning goals, to identify how each general education course aligns with both course level outcomes and overall institutional outcomes, to determine whether appropriate methods of assessment are being utilized in the courses to most effectively measure and assess student learning, to review and make suggestions about department level general education assessment plans, and to review and provide feedback on department annual general education assessment process and results.

In addition, the assessment of general education at NDMU also incorporates the use of standardized tests and assessments such as the Collegiate Learning Assessment, the Major Field Tests, and the Accuplacer placement exam. Along with these direct measures of student learning in core competencies, indirect methods of assessment are also used on a campus wide level, including the National Survey of Student Engagement, the College Senior Survey, the CIRP, the EBI assessment, and other instruments as determined by the University's survey and testing schedule. Data from these direct and indirect methods of assessing the general education outcomes are used together to form a realistic and accurate picture of student success on core competencies. Data and results are used to modify general education

curriculum, to improve course curriculum and content, and to make resource and budget decisions about student support services and related areas.

The assessment of General Education is an annual cycle of assessment using a standardized form and requiring annual submissions from all academic departments as part of the University-wide process to assess student learning and institutional outcomes. The committee anticipates work toward future MSCHE standards requiring attentiveness to sustaining general education goals in graduate programs.

## **Planning and Budget Process**

All planning and budget decision-making is informed by assessment and institutional effectiveness data. Each unit submitting an annual assessment report must identify needed improvements (based on assessment results) and resources required for those improvements. The annual budget request form (submitted to the University Budget Committee for review) contains a justification section that asks for data demonstrating the need for the requested resources. Requests, justification, source data, and decision are recorded in tracking spreadsheets, as are the impact of the allocation of resources and the assessment of the impact. The Budget Committee, comprised of leadership team members, the Faculty Senate president, the Registrar, and a student, make funding recommendations to the Executive Leadership Team and the President, who then review requests, data and recommendations before deciding on final allocation distribution.

## **Assessment of the Assessment Process**

The process for assessing institutional effectiveness and student learning outcomes occurs on a three-year cycle. In the first year, all units respond to a satisfaction and implementation survey requesting feedback on their experience with using and applying assessment results in their areas. This feedback is reviewed by the University Assessment Committee, which is responsible for making improvements in the assessment process based on survey results, and changes in the process are communicated with all units.

A second way that the assessment process is evaluated is through the University Assessment Committee, which measures NDMU assessment goals and outcomes (listed at the beginning of this plan) against process and results. This assessment is conducted on an annual basis during summer. Results are used to modify goals and improve outcomes.

A third way that the assessment process is evaluated is through direct measurement. Using a rubric designed to capture activity at each phase – from plan development through implementation and assessment of improvements – the assessment process is measured based on the extent to which strategic goals are accomplished. A checklist and report card are also used to measure actions and activities designed to facilitate achievement of strategic goals. This

third type of evaluation of the assessment process is coordinated through the Office of the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs and Assessment.

## Summary and Conclusions

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Assessment, as well as its integration into overall processes like budgeting, program planning, and strategic prioritization, plays a key role at NDMU, at every level throughout the institution. Guided by its vision, mission, and strategic priorities, NDMU, the University Assessment Committee, its subcommittees and individual programs and divisions have developed self-assessment tools that focus on both qualitative and quantitative data that is funneled in a pyramid formation through the institution, so that everything from individual student success to the university as a whole can be assessed.

As part of an ever-developing process of assessment, NDMU has developed specific goals for continuing to improve and enhance the University's ability to make assessment-based decisions, including developing a process for feedback and review of assessment plans and reports from across the University; preparing an annual institutional assessment report; creating a formalized structure and framework for the University Assessment Committee and subcommittee structure; and creating a process for assessing, improving, and reporting back on the successful accomplishment of strategic goals.

In addition to internal benchmarking and assessment, NDMU's wide range of undergraduate and graduate programs go through external accreditation processes. As an institution, NDMU is accredited by the Middle States Association of Higher Education and by the Maryland State Department of Education. The School of Pharmacy is accredited by the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education; the School of Education is accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education; and the School of Nursing is accredited by the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing for its Entry Level BSN Program, RN to BSN Program and the MSN program. In addition to these program-based accreditations, the University also holds memberships with eighteen other organizations and associations.

Guided by the University Assessment Committee (UAC) and its four subcommittees (Academic Assessment, General Education, Student Life, and Non-Academic), NDMU has developed a process for University assessment that is student-focused. Through both direct and indirect assessments, students are engaged in evaluating courses and providing feedback on experiential learning, such as service, internships, and study abroad opportunities. In this way, students have an active role in determining and improving their academic and co-curricular experiences. Outside of Academic departments and Student Life divisions, the non-academic areas look closely at their own internal objectives and assess their overall effectiveness, the goal of which is to ultimately improve the overall student experience at NDMU.

The three levels of overall assessment at NDMU include institutional effectiveness, student learning, and general education. At the institutional level, effectiveness is assessed on adherence to and implementation of the Mission, Vision, Strategic Goals, and the Strategic Plan. A University-wide dashboard is used to benchmark these indicators, in addition to division-level assessment reports and institution-wide surveys. Student Learning is assessed primarily within the divisions of Academic Affairs and Student Life and are linked closely with institutional-wide goals and outcomes. Each unit develops an annual assessment plan and then provides results and reporting to Vice Presidents and Deans so that they can shape decisions at higher levels. General Education is assessed annually in the context of the overarching student learning outcomes set forth for the University and is overseen by the General Education Assessment subcommittee. General Education utilizes course assessments, faculty and departmental feedback, standardized assessments, and campus wide student surveys to form a realistic and accurate picture of student success in core competencies. All three levels of assessment are submitted to the University Assessment Committee for review and feedback using a standardized rubric.

In order to prioritize as well as use assessment data to the greatest effect, the data gathered is utilized in all planning and budget decision-making across the University. Each unit submitting an assessment report must identify improvements, based on their assessment data, tied to resource requirements. In this way, the University Budget Committee, the President, and the University's leadership team are able to analyze justification and determine prioritization based on impact and outcomes directly related to mission, vision, strategic goals and strategic planning.

Finally, the process for assessing institutional effectiveness, student learning, and strategic goal meeting is continually improving and being modified to better meet the needs of the University. At NDMU, our assessment of our assessment processes occurs on the three year cycle, including a participant/unit survey, the University Assessment Committee's self-assessment, and an activity-based rubric that aims to capture activity at each phase in the assessment cycle so that effectiveness can be directly measured and evaluated.