City University of Seattle
Mid-Cycle Report

Table of Contents

Section 1: Mission Fulfillment

City University of Seattle (CityU) has been hard at work in the last several years to refine and refocus its ongoing accreditation efforts in light of the new 2020 Standards for Accreditation adopted by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) in January of 2020.

In the fall of 2018, members of the President's Cabinet began re-evaluation of the university's mission and core themes as part of the work in preparation for the Mission and Core Themes Report due in the fall of 2019. The Cabinet worked with various institutional advisory groups to gain feedback and assess the best path forward. In doing so, it took into consideration three things:

- the Commission's forthcoming adoption of new standards that reconsider the role of Core Themes in mission fulfillment;
- a previous recommendation from the Commission that suggested CityU more narrowly focus the data used to assess institutional performance; and
- another previous recommendation asking CityU to better define appropriate data by which it was measuring its Core Themes.

As a result, the Cabinet determined that no change to the mission was warranted: the university remains dedicated to changing lives for good by offering high-quality and relevant lifelong education to anyone with the desire to learn. In reviewing the Core Themes, the Cabinet determined that while the Core Themes have helped focus some of the data that is collected and assessed by the university, the themes did not tie as easily into the strategic planning and resource allocation processes currently employed. As such, university leadership decided to move away from Core Themes beyond January 2020 when the new Standards for Accreditation took effect. In their place, the leadership team began steps to refine the assessment processes currently in place to provide more focus in the data used to assess mission fulfillment and ensure a closer tie to the strategic planning and resource allocation activities it uses annually.

The adjusted framework through which the university assesses mission fulfillment moving forward draws on three aspects of measuring university performance: programmatic outcomes, institutional outcomes, and overall institutional health and sustainability. Further details on each aspect are outlined below.

Programmatic Outcomes

Assessment of programmatic outcomes determines the extent to which individual programs are achieving published student outcomes, are providing an engaging and relevant learning environment, and are sustainable. Full details of what is measured as a part of programmatic assessment is explained in Section 3 of this report. However, a good deal of work has occurred in the last year and a half to improve the quality and meaningfulness of program assessments.

Nearly two years ago, the Deans agreed to move away from secondary rubrics in favor of primary rubrics used to assess individual students' assignments in a variety of courses. To support this move, the university engaged the services of the NERDi Consulting Group to work with every Program Director in the university. The scope of consultations was to refine and improve the quality of program learning outcomes, to map course learning outcomes to the programmatic ones, identify key assignments throughout the curriculum where mastery of each is outcome was assessed, and to develop rubrics for each assignment that specify achievement levels. This work has been completed for all undergraduate programs with all programs scheduled to be completed before spring quarter 2021. Work on master and doctoral programs is currently underway.

As part of learning outcome alignment work, the university also developed and adopted new General Education Outcomes, which were also mapped as part of the work with NERDi. Full details on this project can be found in Section 5 of this report.

Concurrently, the Continuous Improvement Committee (CIC), which is responsible for overseeing program assessment, engaged in revising student End of Course Evaluations completed at the end of each course. Previous iterations of the EOCE had focused exclusively on faculty facilitation and delivery in courses. The new version that of the EOCE launched in fall of 2020 and includes additional questions addressing course design, usefulness of course materials and resources, and a self-assessment of student engagement and effort. A copy of the new EOCE is found in Appendix A.

During this period, the Provost worked with the university's data team to develop a "program health card" for all programs. Program health cards provide program directors and Deans easily accessible data through a dashboard showing headcount, credits taught, retention and persistence rates, completion rates, internal demand for shared courses, inquiry rates from new students, new student starts, and average credits per student. The aim of the health cards is to provide validated information to be included in program assessment and a means to determine the viability and sustainability of a particular program. These metrics are meant to provide a consistent framework for Program Directors and other program constituents to develop strategic initiatives that drive continuous improvement. These will also be utilized in the institutional strategic planning process. Examples of program health cards can be found in Appendix B.

Institutional Outcomes

Assessment of institutional outcomes determines the extent to which the university as a whole is facilitating student achievement on key measures such as persistence, retention, completion, and post-graduation success. Full details of assessment of student achievement are provided in the next section of this report.

In addition to these measures, university leadership will also use a number of other measures to assess mission fulfillment, including assessment of individual departments' performance in reports that mirror academic program assessment. These reports are explained in Section 4 of this report, as they are planned for development in the coming year, and are intended to assess the efficacy of support services provided by the university outside of the classroom and across campus.

Additional data points include results of the annual Student Satisfaction Survey and the Alumni Survey. Results of these surveys, due to lower response rates, do not provide sufficient data at the programmatic level when parsed, but are relevant for institutional level assessment. Examples of data from both surveys can be found in Appendix C.

Institutional Health and Sustainability

As a non-profit institution that is tuition driven, it is critical that the leadership team include assessment of the institution's financial health and sustainability as a part of determining mission fulfillment. The President's Cabinet regular monitors key metrics such as institutional enrollment trends, new student growth, balance of enrollment across programs, balance of enrollments by location, return on marketing investments, staffing levels by site, and facility needs and costs by site.

As part of its annual planning and budgeting work, the leadership teams also evaluate the success of key strategic partnerships related to recruiting and enrollment, the value of articulation agreements with other institutions, and considers market research aimed at identifying growth opportunities within the university's portfolio of program offerings.

The university continually seeks to maximize student accessibility to higher education by keeping the cost of education manageable, realizing that every dollar spent comes from or will come from a student's pocket. All management teams are cognizant of the fiduciary responsibility to appropriately manage students' tuition dollars. Annual assessment activities are aimed at ensuring the best use of those

dollars to consistently provide high quality programs that meet student needs and expectations at the most affordable cost to students.

Section 2: Student Achievement

As an integral part of both its programmatic and institutional assessment programs, CityU has long included key measures of student achievement including persistence, retention, and graduation rates. For some programs, the university has also tracked post-graduate success, based primarily on the needs of programmatic accreditation expectations. The results of these assessments have been published on the university website here: https://www.cityu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/SP_6262_Fast-Facts_10.8.2020.pdf. The university uses the following definitions for these measures:

- **Retention**: the number of students who were enrolled in the previous academic year who are still currently enrolled
- **Persistence**: the number of students who were enrolled in the previous quarter who are still currently enrolled
- **Graduation**: the number of students who completed their program of study within 150% of the timeframe it takes to complete the program as a fulltime student

CityU set as a strategic goal for the 2020-21 academic year to increase student retention by 5% and completion rates by 3% in the next year. The current undergraduate retention rate for the university is 67%. The completion rate for graduate programs is 81%. The bachelor degree graduation rate is 48% and the graduate degree graduation rate is 70%. The university's Retention Committee detailed initiatives in a retention plan intended to improve these rates. The university retention plan is included in Appendix D.

As part of the planning efforts, described in Section 1, and built into the retention plan, several initiatives were developed to prepare the university to meet the expectations of the NWCCU 2020 Standards for Accreditation. While the university has a strong handle on data related to persistence, retention, and completion rates, there is room to improve the consistency of data that is collected as well as in deepening understanding of how best to make improvements in student achievement to elevate these rates. Two key initiatives were aimed at improving the quality of the data the university was collecting with the goal of improved data-informed decision-making.

Initiative: Improve record keeping practices to better represent non-degree completers
Until recently, CityU did not designate individuals who are pursuing non-degree programs such as certifications as completers. This did not provide a true view of those who complete their educational goals with the institution. As a result of this initiative, a designation was added to the student information system, PeopleSoft, that allows the Registrar to appropriately capture all completers, regardless of educational goal.

Initiative: Collecting appropriate demographic information
CityU has historically had a high rate of students who choose not to report race/ethnicity. As NWCCU has moved to require disaggregation by demographic groups to identify and address gaps in student achievement, the university sought to improve on the rate of students reporting this data. Language on application for admission that asked for this data has been reworded to better explain to students why the information is collected and how the university intends to use demographic data. The questions on the application were also tied to the data fields in PeopleSoft so that they can be used as a search factor in reporting. Collecting this information supports the initiative related to addressing diversity representation so that work can be better targeted and more effective.

The university data team is in the process of developing interactive tools that will show real-time achievement data that will allow users to explore a variety of dimensions within achievement data. While those tools are being developed, and to jump-start efforts to analyze and publicize disaggregated achievement data by a variety of demographic categories, CityU engaged Hanover research to analyze 5

years of data from 2016-2020 for major trends that could be addressed as a starting point. This data has been published on the University's website at: https://www.cityu.edu/about-cityu/. A copy of the pdf from the website is included as Appendix E of this report.

The CityU Retention Committee has already begun developing strategies aimed at closing achievement gaps identified in this data to better serve all students on campus.

Further, to support this work and help the institution become more savvy in its ability to disaggregate demographic data, CityU has joined the NWCCU pilot program to help institutions join the National Student Clearinghouse's Postsecondary Data Partnership (PDP). Work to support that effort is described in Section 4 of this report.

Finally, part of the work the university is undertaking is a review of what institutions it considers to be peer institutions for the purpose of comparing data on student achievement. CityU has typically considered institutions such as Antioch University and Western Governors University as peers, but comparison to these peers on outcome metrics has not been conducted previously. Participation in the PDP will help CityU refine whom it defines as peers and provide access to their outcomes data for comparative purposes.

Section 3: Programmatic Assessment

All CityU faculty are actively engaged in assessing student learning related to the specific program learning outcomes that are defined by each program. Through the use of assignment rubrics within courses, Program Directors gather and analyze direct evidence of student learning and apply the lessons learned to program improvement. The assessment process consists of:

- **Program Design**: As new programs are designed, or existing programs undergo substantial revision (typically as a result of a 5-year review), a set of Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) are identified and established that are aligned with disciplinary and industry needs. These Program Learning Outcomes are the behaviors and knowledge that graduates should be able to demonstrate upon completion of the program. The alignment of these goals with the program outcomes is determined in this Program Design stage.
- **Course and Shell Design**: Once the Program Learning Outcomes are established and aligned with general education outcomes, a series of courses are developed that comprise the program. Each course has a series of course level outcomes that, again, specify what the student will be able to do upon successful completion of a given course. The course outcomes are conceptually aligned with and support the PLOs. A Program Design Guide, a form of a curriculum map, is used to ensure that all PLOs and general education outcomes have been sufficiently accounted for across courses. This map indicates where specific assessments are used to assess student performance at the course, program and/or learning goal level. When the course documents are completed, they are translated into a course shell in the learning management system that captures the design of each course and its alignment with the Program Learning Outcomes.
- **Primary Rubric Assessments:** As each course's shell is created, a rubric for every major assessment is designed to facilitate useful and timely feedback from the instructor to the student. Instructors are expected to make comments on, and complete a rubric for, every assignment in each course.
- **Academic Program Assessment Process**: City University of Seattle has developed a culture of continuous improvement, including a commitment to the use of data and evidence to inform the assessment and improvement of its programs and services. A major component of this culture is an ongoing, evidence-based review and improvement process for all academic programs, known as the Annual Program Assessment Review (APAR). The APAR review process occurs annually and is conducted by the Continuous Improvement Committee (CIC), with representatives from each school, the Center for Curriculum & Instruction (CCI), the data team, and the library. The Dean of each school is responsible for ensuring that program reviews occur annually according to

the standards outlined in the Academic Assessment policy. Every five years, programs undergo a comprehensive evaluation that summarizes and evaluates the impact of changes made over the last five reviews and suggests more wide-spread changes to the curriculum as needed.

Data for the APAR reports are generated by CityU's data team and distributed to the Program's Director and the school's Dean who generate the report's analysis prior its submission to the CIC. This ensures compliance with the intent of continuous improvement. The APAR presently has three reporting sections:

- Review of the previous year's goals and modifications;
- Analysis of program data;
- Proposed actions to be taken.

A key part of this report evidences the program's performance on assessment rubrics that align with identified learning outcomes. Program Directors are expected to evaluate the performance of their programs relative to student performance, EOCE data, instructor end of course evaluations, enrollments, and other key performance indicators. The report also takes into consideration feedback from programmatic accreditors and advisory boards when appropriate. Where there is a clear need to improve, based on the analysis of outcome and other data, the Program Director must formulate an improvement plan for the coming year including any changes that need to be made to the program's design to improve performance on student outcomes. APAR results are housed in a central location, allowing both faculty and administrators to see and analyze program performance for quality assurance and continuous improvement. Policies related to the CIC and the APAR process can be found in found in Appendix F, along with example of completed APARs from two programs, one annual review and one five-year review.

Section 4: Moving Forward

As City University of Seattle looks toward preparing for the Year Seven Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness Report, there are three main arenas of focus: data collection and analysis; strategic planning; and equity, diversity and inclusion initiatives. Below are brief descriptions of the work that is planned.

Data Collection and Analysis

As described in previous sections, the university has already begun work to adjust its data collection methods to ensure more consistent, quality student demographics data. To this end, work has already occurred, as well, to improve the quality and consistency of student outcome data at both program and institutional levels.

The work that lies ahead will focus on utilizing the systems recently revised or put into place to extract actual data, build meaningful reports, and analyze for application. The key focus of future work is developing and refining the disaggregation of data by various demographic populations. This will allow evaluation and analysis of achievement gaps and point the way towards programs and initiatives aimed at closing them. To assist in this effort, CityU has joined NWCCU's pilot program to assist institutions in joining the PDP. While the data team will build a suite of in-house tools and reports, university leaders believe participation in the PDP will assist in helping the data team achieve a higher level of sophistication in university reporting. Participation in the PDP will also provide CityU with meaningful data from peer institutions against which leadership may benchmark CityU performance on key measures.

Another piece of data collection that will be developed over the next year is the implementation of a survey to collect post-graduation employment data for graduating students. The Provost's office has identified a survey tool for collecting this data and will be working with appropriate offices on campus to implement the instrument and begin collecting data to determine post-graduation success. This data will be utilized at both the programmatic and institutional levels.

Strategic Planning & Resource Allocation

While the university has long conducted strategic planning that is data-focused and inclusive of campus constituencies, as mentioned in Section 1, leadership is working to refine the planning process to strengthen both of these aspects, as well as to include the updated data reporting and analysis described in this report. At present, individual academic programs identify strategic initiative and budgetary implications as part of the APAR process described in Section 3. The CIC is working on an annual report, that when completed in summer 2021, will summarize major trends in programmatic assessment seeking to identify campus wide initiatives that can affect multiple programs and have meaningful impact on campus-wide metrics. This annual report will become part of the university's data set used to build and refine the strategic plan. In addition, the plan will include assessment reports on the efficacy of administrative departments that mirror the assessment of academic programs provided by the APARs. Development of these reports is planned for the 2021-22 Academic Year.

Strategic planning has also drawn on internal marketing data as well as market research conducted by the university's research firm, Hanover Research, to identify potential growth areas in existing and new programs. Planning has not consistently included initiatives aimed specifically at improving student retention and completion, nor has it included initiatives aimed at closing achievement gaps in various student demographics. The new data reports and analyses provided by the initiatives outlined above will become part of the strategic planning process with a specific section of the plan focused entirely on improving student achievement at both the programmatic and institutional levels. Annual reports generated by the Social Justice Coalition and the new Director of Diversity position (described below) will also inform this work in the planning process.

The outcome of this work will also better align the strategic planning process with resource allocation through the university's budgeting process. The revised strategic planning exercises and documents will more clearly identify required resources to execute strategic initiatives that guide annual budgeting and resources allocations.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

In the last year, CityU has made a significant commitment to better supporting the diversity of its student population and ensuring equitable and inclusive learning environments for all students. Given the global focus of City University of Seattle, this has always been something that is important to the institution, but national and world events in the last couple of years have reinforced the importance of such work, and CityU, like all institutions, has room to improve in this regard. In the last year, a Social Justice Coalition has been formed with representation from across the university. The group is focused on identifying and driving initiatives aimed at improving equity and inclusion across the campus.

To guide that group's effort and drive campus wide initiatives, the university is establishing a new Director of Diversity position. The position has been budgeted for Fiscal Year 21-22 and the university plans to begin a search in spring of 2021.

The campus has conducted a preliminary assessment of the diversity representation of faculty and staff relative to the student population. The university will continue to refine the data it collects to better assess this representation, but will also, more importantly, be working to close representational gaps in faculty and staff, particularly in Hispanic and African American populations where the greatest disparities have been identified.

Academic Affairs for the university is in the early planning stages of conducting a diversity audit of its programs, curricula, and teaching methodologies. Various frameworks are being assessed for use and the target date to begin the audit is summer 2021. All offices, programs, and departments will participate in the audit. This work will be headed by the Provost and the Director of Diversity collectively. Findings from both the diversity audit and from analysis of disaggregated student achievement data, as described above, will form the basis for the university's action plan to close equity gaps and ensure improved equity and inclusion across the institution. As a first step, the CCI is conducting a research study to better understand student and faculty experiences of diversity on campus and in the classroom.

Section 5: Addressing Previous Recommendations

In a letter to the University dated February 3, 2020, the Commission requested that CityU include in this report addressing Recommendation 3 from CityU's Spring 2018 Mission Fulfillment and Sustainability Report. As result of CityU's Fall 2019 Ad Hoc Report, Recommendation 3 was continued as Needs Improvement (2020 Standards 1.C.6). The full recommendation and CityU's response are detailed below.

Recommendation:

3. Collaboratively formalize and implement a General Education assessment plan, with identifiable and assessable outcomes (2.C.10).

CityU has formalized and implemented a General Education Assessment Plan. At the time of the 2018 Year Seven Evaluation, CityU had in place "City University Learning Goals" (CULGs) that, in 2016, were matrixed to general education outcomes identified in select Association of American Colleges & Universities' (AAC & U) Value Rubrics. These learning goals were assessed through program-specific and general education courses throughout all associate- and bachelor-level courses, but the evaluation team found that "there does not appear to be any direct assessment of the university's general education requirement as a separate program."

To address this, in the Fall of 2018, the university renewed its focus on general education outcome assessment. A work group was formed with members recommended by academic deans to support formalizing and completing CityU's integration of the general education assessment plan with identifiable and assessable outcomes. The task group members included representation from all schools in the university.

The work group's initial work included review of the CULG rubrics and the AAC & U Value Rubrics. Use of the Value Rubrics as a foundation for CityU's general education outcomes continued to be of interest as they are nationally vetted and, if desired in the future, could be drawn upon as a source for benchmarking CityU students' achievement of the adopted outcomes.

A select number of Value Rubrics, aligned with existing CULGs, were identified as relevant to City University of Seattle's undergraduate programs, with academic program directors' confidence that they applied across each school and discipline. Each member of the work group was assigned one of the identified rubrics to draft a version specific to CityU's academic programs with discrete and clearly defined criteria and descriptors to assess student achievement of the general education learning outcomes. The outcomes selected include: Communication, Critical Thinking, Diversity, Ethical Reasoning, and Quantitative Literacy.

The draft outcomes and associated rubrics were reviewed by Academic Affairs Council (AAC) at the February 2019 meeting. With the knowledge that NWCCU was revising standards, including the general education outcome standards, AAC tabled final approval of the outcomes pending further information on NWCCUs revisions. The general education outcomes and associated rubrics were brought back to the May 2019 AAC meeting where they were approved. A copy of the approved outcomes and their associated rubrics can be found in Appendix G.

Dr. Scott Carnz was hired as Provost of City University of Seattle in February of 2019. In summer of 2019 he asked the program directors of undergraduate degrees to begin the process of integrating the adopted general education outcomes into primary grading rubrics for required assignments. This process includes the following steps:

1. Update the Program Design Guide, using a new template, to plan for and document which courses and assessments will be used to measure student achievement of general education

learning outcomes. Two blank design guides (one for undergraduate programs, the other for graduate programs) and two sample design guides can be found in Appendix H;

2. Implement new data extraction programming to collect assessment data from the university's learning management system (Blackboard);
3. Integrate the data extraction into university dashboards for analysis and application by program directors;
4. Implement the revised Program Design Guide, adding the general education learning outcomes to specific course assignments;
5. Remove the CULGs from secondary rubrics as these will no longer be used to measure student achievement of general education learning outcomes;
6. Integrate the general education learning outcome data into the annual and 5-year program assessment process lead by the Academic Assessment Committee.

Professional staff from CityU's CCI held meetings with the program directors for all undergraduate programs to ensure a consistent approach to integration of the learning outcomes. The partnership with NERDi and CCI served as support for program directors as they modified their programs and adopted these changes.

Data on general education outcomes is used and analyzed in two manners. First, the outcomes will continue to be a part of the assessment of overall program effectiveness for each associate and bachelor degree program. Second, data specific to general education outcomes will be extracted and analyzed separately across programs in order to directly assess the CityU general education requirements as a separate program. This data will be included in an Annual Program Assessment Report (APAR) specific to general education and will inform any recommended programmatic changes including any adjustments to general education outcomes, courses, or instructional methodologies.

The first data pull from the university's learning management system occurred at the end of fall 2020. The first data pull was to test the programming of the rubric lines in the learning management system to ensure appropriate data was extracted and useable for analysis. As that first run was successful, the university will continue to extract data each quarter. The CCI team and Provost's office plan to do initial analysis of university wide data at the end of the spring quarter after a full year's data has been collected. In fall quarter of 2021, individual programs should also have enough initial data to conduct initial analysis of the outcomes within their program. Results of the first data pull of the first quarter's data from completed undergraduate programs is included in Appendix I as evidence of this process. The data provided here as evidence is raw data only. CityU's data team is working on dashboard visualizations of this data that we anticipate being able to share with the team when it conducts it visit.