

Mid-Cycle Evaluation

Oregon State University
Corvallis, Oregon (Virtual)
April 25-26, 2022

A confidential report of findings prepared for the
Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities

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Evaluators

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Introduction

The purpose of this Mid-Cycle Evaluation visit was to provide a formative evaluation of student learning outcomes and assessment to assist Oregon State University (OSU) in determining their preparedness for their upcoming Year Seven Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness (EIE). The evaluation team also reviewed OSU's progress on two recommendations from the 2019 Mission Fulfillment and Sustainability Evaluation, which carried over from the 2020 Special Report and Ad Hoc Evaluation. A two-member evaluation committee, assisted by a staff liaison from the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU), conducted the Mid-Cycle Evaluation of OSU on behalf of the Commission. The evaluation committee members are listed on page 3 of this report. The committee submits this confidential report of its findings consistent with the requirements of a Mid-Cycle review.

OSU is a land, sea, space, and sun grant institution with a Carnegie Classification for Very High Research Activity that offers baccalaureate, masters, and doctoral degrees in more than 300 areas of study. The university serves more than 34,000 students across its main Corvallis campus, OSU-Cascades campus in Bend, and Ecampus online.

This report focuses on Standard One – student success and institutional mission and effectiveness. The team conducted a virtual evaluation and team members used the Mid-Cycle Self-Study, electronic exhibits, personal observations, and in-depth interviews to complete their work. OSU provided numerous support documents both in advance of the visit and as requested during the visit. A list of individuals/groups interviewed during the virtual visit is provided in Appendix A. The evidence obtained during the visit complemented the Mid-Cycle Self-Study, and the committee's findings rely on the Self-Study and visit taken together for its picture of Oregon State University.

The evaluators found the self-study to be well-written and complete. Delegates from OSU were collegial, candid, responsive, and facilitated a smooth, pleasant visit for which the evaluators wish to convey their gratitude.

Part I: Mission Fulfillment

The Oregon State University mission statement emphasizes the institution's role as a Research 1 land grant institution and articulates a focus on:

- Producing skilled graduates who are critical thinkers.
- Searching actively for new knowledge and solutions.
- Developing the next generation of scholars.
- Collaborating with communities in Oregon and around the world.
- Maintaining a rigorous focus on academic excellence, particularly in three signature areas: the science of sustainable Earth ecosystems, health and wellness, and economic prosperity and social progress.

Oregon State University evaluates mission fulfillment via a number of yardsticks. Based upon NWCCU recommendations from the 2019 Year Seven Self-Evaluation Report, OSU has reduced the number of yardsticks from 17 to 6. This change also reflects an intent to align more closely with outcomes rather than inputs and ties together the accreditation and strategic planning processes. The evaluators found that these yardsticks are adequate indicators of mission fulfillment and they are aligned with their latest strategic plan, SP4.0, that was implemented in 2019.

Updates to strategic planning follow a 5-year cycle, and the next planning cycle is due to begin in summer 2022. Even though OSU is in the midst of a presidential search, the strategic planning process will continue moving forward. The review team found that OSU has a strong culture of strategic planning with involvement from a steering group composed of faculty, professional faculty, staff, students, and center/institute directors. There is significant outreach to the campus community, including the Cascade Campus, via a number of listening sessions. Other stakeholders are given an opportunity for input at other meetings.

The evaluators found that OSU is well prepared to engage in the fifth iteration of strategic planning, having a defined planning process with clear goals, and a solid foundation in strategic planning.

Part II: Student Achievement

Oregon State University places a high focus on closing achievement gaps, as indicated by their commitment to inclusive excellence, which features heavily in their strategic planning, and in the indicators they choose as benchmarks for mission fulfillment. OSU disaggregates student achievement data by a number of contextually appropriate demographic variables including Pell eligibility, underrepresented minority status, sex, residency, and first-generation status. OSU does not disaggregate data by nontraditional age. Though their Ecampus population is largely made up of nontraditional students, the majority of first-year students on the main campus are defined as traditional students. The evaluators do suggest that OSU internally monitor the progress and student learning attainment of their nontraditional Ecampus students to ensure their needs are appropriately met.

Through examination of the self-study along with conversations with various constituents across campus, the evaluators learned that OSU is concerned with a number of equity gaps among student populations and has adopted several strategies to close these gaps. For example, the evaluators heard from administrators that financial need is a factor in one equity gap. To make progress in the closure of this gap, the institution has developed several initiatives to ease the financial burden for students, including offering completion and persistence scholarships and through a financial education program called Center for Advancing Financial Education (CAFÉ). The evaluators heard from students how much they appreciate financial assistance and how it personally impacts their decisions to reenroll at OSU.

The evaluators suggest that OSU continues work to support student success, particularly in the areas of financial aid and diversity, equity, & inclusion efforts.

The evaluators heard from several groups about plans to reform the Baccalaureate Core, which is in progress. The reform is informed by best practices and places focus on supporting transfer students in particular. OSU hopes to have the new Baccalaureate Core in place before the EIE visit in 2026. As the institution moves toward the Baccalaureate Core redesign, the evaluators suggest that OSU thoughtfully and intentionally integrate assessment into the redesign and begin meaningful data collection and analysis as soon as possible in order to demonstrate attainment of the new Baccalaureate Core goals for the EIE self-study and site visit.

Part III: Programmatic Assessment

Case Study 1 explored the Department of Integrative Biology's Bachelor of Science in Biology program assessment. This assessment typifies mature undergraduate program assessment at OSU. The evaluation team was provided both an in-depth case study in the self-study, and an opportunity to meet with three instructional faculty from the program and both the in-coming and out-going Associate Deans for Academic and Student Affairs from the College of Science. The three instructional faculty receive course releases to manage the program-level assessment.

Measurement of student learning outcomes is based on a mix of national tests and course-specific assignments. The 3-person assessment team reviews this data and works with the departmental curriculum committee to develop academic program recommendations to the full faculty. Thus, the full faculty have a voice in program changes.

In fall 2021, observed changes in standardized test scores led to the re-alignment of program learning outcomes to match modern biology curricula. The American Association for the Academy of Science's 2011 report on Vision and Change in Undergraduate Biology Education (<https://visionandchange.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/aaas-VISchange-web1113.pdf>) led to the creation of a new series of introductory courses for the major. This change appears to the review team to be outside the context of the formal program assessment process.

[BJ1] However, it has impacted the assessment process as the program has created a new curriculum map for skill-based outcomes.

The evaluators observed that Annual Undergraduate Program Assessment Report Feedback is focused only on the assessment process – for example, whether learning outcomes or metrics should be updated – and that the Biology Assessment committee is responsible for programmatic changes stemming from their data collection and assessment efforts. In 2021, the Annual Undergraduate Program Assessment Report template was updated to include reporting on course-level and program-level decisions that are made as part of the assessment process. This is a step towards effectively documenting the closing of the assessment loop.

The biology assessment team also contributes to the Baccalaureate Core – which is governed by a standing sub-committee of the Faculty Senate. The review team noted that there appears to be some faculty fatigue with Baccalaureate Core, Undergraduate, Graduate, and Academic Unit Assessments happening on a frequent basis.

Case Study Two provided insight into OSU’s Theatre Arts Minor and Option. Through the self-study document and conversations with representatives from the Theatre Arts program and the College of Liberal Arts, evaluators learned that the Theatre Arts program faculty have created an assessment plan that is well-integrated into the curriculum. In preparation to develop a unique Theatre Arts degree, the program faculty reviewed existing pre-requisite courses and reviewed the existing assessment plan, including the curriculum map. Faculty have developed rubrics to ensure that assessment of program outcomes is consistent and objective, while leaving flexibility for understanding the performative nature of the program. The evaluators heard that Theatre Arts faculty are currently a small number; while additional hiring needs to take place, the representatives noted that having few faculty members makes decision-making somewhat less complex and has aided in the development of a robust assessment plan.

Case Study Three focused on the Food Science and Technology Graduate Program. Faculty representatives from this area met with the evaluators and described a process by which faculty have developed rubrics to assess their student learning outcomes, which have been simplified to match OSU’s Graduate Learning Outcomes. Representatives from the Food Science and Technology program noted that while students performed well, they had expected more students to perform in the “exceptional” category. This sparked an interesting discussion about distributions of student performance and benchmarking. The evaluators found that faculty in this program are engaged and interested in assessment, and use assessment results to make thoughtful and data-driven decisions about their program.

PART IV: Moving Forward

Oregon State University has a number of planned and partially implemented initiatives in place to carry the institution forward toward the Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness (EIE) self-study and site visit in 2026. The evaluators found that OSU is generally on the right path toward a successful EIE site visit. In particular, OSU is well prepared to engage in the fifth iteration of strategic planning, having a defined planning process with clear goals, and a solid foundation in strategic planning.

The evaluation team made several observations and suggestions for OSU as the institution prepares for this visit:

- The evaluators suggest that OSU continues work to support student success, particularly in the areas of financial aid and diversity, equity, & inclusion efforts.
- There are a number of student success initiatives and programs in various stages of development. The evaluators suggest that OSU carefully evaluate the efficacy of these programs in order to ensure that all students are meeting institutionally defined benchmarks, regardless of location or modality.
- As the institution moves toward the Baccalaureate Core redesign, the evaluators suggest that OSU thoughtfully and intentionally integrate assessment into the redesign and begin meaningful data collection and analysis as soon as possible in order to demonstrate attainment of the new Baccalaureate Core goals for the EIE self-study and site visit.
- The evaluators suggest that OSU consider streamlining and integrating, where appropriate, all assessment initiatives such as Baccalaureate Core Assessment, Undergraduate and Graduate Program Assessment and the Academic Unit Assessment Processes.
- The evaluators suggest that as OSU continues progress toward the Undergraduate Program Assessment Revision Project, the institution focuses on courses and programs that bridge locations and modalities. For example, benchmarks for attainment of student learning outcomes should be standardized across locations and modalities to ensure consistent quality of student learning.

PART V: Addendums (Where Applicable)

Recommendation 2: Spring 2019 Mission Fulfillment and Sustainability -Continue to exercise great care that credit and degrees, wherever offered and however delivered, are based on documented student achievement of the established Oregon State University learning outcomes. (2020 Standard(s) 1.C.2)

The evaluation team observed a number of steps that OSU has taken to address this recommendation. First, OSU has updated their Undergraduate Annual Program Assessment Report template and their Graduate Learning Outcomes Report template to include information about student learning outcomes for OSU-Cascades, Ecampus, and other extension sites. OSU stresses the importance of this modality/location assessment via the University Student Learning Assessment Council.

Example Annual Program Assessment Reports provided by OSU demonstrate that some programs comply with this new template; however, the review team noted that some programs have different benchmarks depending upon modality or location. **Benchmarks for attainment**

of student learning outcomes should be standardized across locations and modalities to ensure consistent quality of student learning. [BJ2]

Recommendation 3: Spring 2019 Mission Fulfillment and Sustainability -Use the results of core theme assessments, particularly student learning outcomes assessment, more consistently for improvement by informing planning, decision-making, and allocation of resources and capacity. Make student learning outcomes assessment results available to constituencies outside Oregon State University in a timely manner. (2020 Standard(s) 1.D.3;1.D.4)

OSU has taken several steps to begin to address Recommendation 3, including revising the assessment report forms to require information about how programs use their assessment data, providing detailed feedback on assessment reports, and undergoing a revision of the program assessment process. This revision project is set to be completed and implemented by winter of 2023.

While the self-study noted that all undergraduate and graduate programs list their student learning outcomes in the Academic Catalog, evaluators could not find learning outcomes listed for individual graduate programs. Through inquiry it was found that the graduate programs use a common set of learning outcomes which can be found on a university webpage; however, the evaluators found it somewhat difficult to find the graduate learning outcomes and wonder whether prospective students or other stakeholders would have similar difficulty in finding the learning outcomes for these programs.

The evaluators found that, generally, OSU has many components in process that will continue to address Recommendation 3. As many of these processes are very new, or in the planning phase, the efficacy of these processes individually or as a whole is yet to be determined. The evaluators found through conversations that faculty do seem to have an integrated view of assessment, though some expressed confusion about expectations, and in some cases, concerns about workload.

Appendix A – OSU Mid-Cycle Visit Schedule and Invited Participants



Oregon State
University

NWCCU Mid-Cycle Visit Schedule & Invited Participants April 25-26, 2022 Monday, April

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8:30 – 9:15 AM **Welcome Meeting**

Invited Participants

- Rebecca Johnson, Interim President
- Edward Feser, Provost and Executive Vice President
- Alix Gitelman, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, Senior Vice Provost and Accreditation Liaison Officer
- JoAnne Bunnage, Assistant Vice Provost, Assessment and Accreditation

9:30 – 10: 20 AM **Institutional Effectiveness and University Strategic Planning**

Invited Participants

- Edward Feser, Provost and Executive Vice President
- Alix Gitelman, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, Senior Vice Provost and Accreditation Liaison Officer
- Richard Settersten, Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs

10:30 – 11:20 AM **Student Achievement and Assessment**

Invited Participants

- Stephanie Bernell, Associate Dean, Graduate School
- JoAnne Bunnage, Assistant Vice Provost, Assessment and Accreditation
- Kristin Nagy Catz, Director of Assessment, Assessment and Accreditation
- Heath Henry, Assessment Coordinator, Assessment and Accreditation
- Jessica DuPont, Executive Director of Market Development and the Student Experience, Ecampus
- Marleigh Perez, Director of Student Success, Ecampus
- Neil Browne, Interim Dean of Academic Affairs, Cascades Campus
- Anne-Marie Deitering, Delpha and Donald Campbell Dean of Libraries, University Libraries

- Maureen Cochran, Senior Director, Strategic Initiatives & Assessment, Student Affairs Assessment
- Byron Marshall, Assistant Dean for Assessment, Accreditation and Analytics, College of Business
- Wade Marcum, Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs, Professor, College of Engineering

11:30 AM – 12:20 PM **Unscheduled Team Time & Lunch**

12:30 – 1:20 PM **Student Learning Meeting #1 – Undergraduate Program Assessment Representatives**
Integrative Biology and Theatre Arts - Case Studies 1 & 2

Invited Participants

- Adam Chouinard, Instructor, Department of Integrative Biology
- Lori Kayes, Associate Head, Department of Integrative Biology
- Nathan Kirk, Senior Instructor I, Department of Integrative Biology
- Henri Jansen, Associate Dean - Academic and Student Affairs, College of Science
- Jessica Siegel, Associate Dean - Academic and Student Affairs, College of Science
- Elizabeth Helman, Area Coordinator, Theatre Arts
- John Edwards, Associate Dean, College of Liberal Arts

1:30 – 2:20 PM **Student Learning Meeting 2 – Graduate School/Professional Program Assessment Representatives**
Food Science & Technology Graduate Program – Case Study 3
College of Pharmacy and Carlson College of Veterinary Medicine

Invited Participants

- Lisbeth Goddik, Department Head, Department of Food Science and Technology
- Deborah Gould, Academic Program Coordinator, Department of Food Science & Technology
- Chris Curtin, Graduate Chair, Department of Food Science and Technology
- Ricardo Mata Gonzalez, Associate Dean of Academic Programs and Professor, College of Agricultural Sciences
- Tanya Ostrogorsky, Director-Assessment and Faculty Development, College of Pharmacy
- Kate Scollan, Associate Dean for Student and Academic Affairs, Associate Professor – Cardiology, Carlson College of Veterinary Medicine
- Stephanie Bernell, Associate Dean, Graduate School
- Kristin Nage Catz, Director of Assessment, Accreditation and Assessment

2:30 – 3:00 PM Student Government and Leadership Representatives

Invited Participants

- Nicholas Conroy, Cascades Adventures, outdoor adventure program, OSUCascades
- Alex Gonzalez, Interfraternity Council VP Recruitment, fraternity member, Public Health and Human Sciences Peer Advisor
- Samira Harris, United Black Council member, Educational Opportunity Program • Sheila Kelliher, University Legislative Scholars, Vice President local Trout Unlimited chapter, Board member, Deerfield River Watershed Association and Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership Board, Ecampus
- Gabriela Prescott, Beaver Connect Peer Mentor, Educational Opportunity Program
- Joseph Page, ASOSU Student Fee Committee Chair-elect, former Resident Hall Association President, Public Health and Human Sciences Ambassador
- Bailie Shultz, University Legislative Scholars, Steer-A-Year, Agriculture Leadership Academy, Sigma Kappa member, Panhellenic Council
- Samantha Stuve, University Legislative Scholars, Resident Assistant • Hannah Worley, Hall Council for residence halls, OSU-Cascades

3:00 – 3:30 PM Beaver Connect and CAFÉ Program Representatives

Invited Participants

- Gloria Crisp, Professor, Adult and Higher Education Program Chair (Beaver Connect)
- Caitlin McVay, Beaver Connect Program Coordinator, Educational Opportunities Program
- Janet Nishihara, Executive Director, Educational Opportunities Program (Beaver Connect)
- Prem Mathews, Associate Dean for Undergraduate Student Development, College of Business (CAFÉ Program)
- Kayleen Salchenberg, Program Manager, Student Engagement (CAFÉ Program)

3:30 – 4:00 PM Academic Unit Assessment

Participants

- Alix Gitelman, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, Senior Vice Provost and Accreditation Liaison Officer

- Philip Mote, Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School
- Ellen Smit, Professor; Associate Dean for Academic and Faculty Affairs, College of Public Health and Human Sciences
- Amanda Armington, Director of Assessment and Accreditation, College of Public Health and Human Sciences

4:15 – 5:00 PM **Recap/Reflection/Moving Forward**

Invited Participants

- Rebecca Johnson, Interim President
- Edward Feser, Provost and Executive Vice President
- Alix Gitelman, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, Senior Vice Provost and Accreditation Liaison Officer
- JoAnne Bunnage, Assistant Vice Provost, Assessment and Accreditation

Tuesday, April 26

10:00 AM **Exit Meeting**

Invited Participants

- Rebecca Johnson, Interim President
- Edward Feser, Provost and Executive Vice President
- Alix Gitelman, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, Senior Vice Provost and Accreditation Liaison Officer
- JoAnne Bunnage, Assistant Vice Provost, Assessment and Accreditation