Stony Brook University

SBU Assessment Council
2024-25 Academic Year Summary Report | June 2025
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I.   Executive Summary

The faculty-led SBU Assessment Council, charged jointly by the Provost and the University Senate, continued to make progress on its charge and responsibilities in the 2024-25 academic year. As the Council matured in its third year, members had more opportunities to engage in substantive discussion and refine existing assessment processes. With full representation from all SBU Schools and Colleges, its 17 faculty members and seven supporting administrators conducted a review of last year's academic program assessment reports, implemented improvements in the assessment reporting process for the coming year, and provided guidance on general education assessment processes. In addition, the Council supported professional development and recognition in assessment by promoting and attending the annual Assessment Symposium and Assessment Recognition Event, as well as by reviewing nominees and selecting finalists for the annual Excellence in Educational Effectiveness Award. Lastly, the Council began to incorporate the student voice in assessment by starting a dialogue with the co-chairs of the Student Assessment Council. Overall, the Council is poised to continue on a successful trajectory in 2025-26 with a focus on supporting programs to engage in meaningful assessment and promoting a culture of assessment that values transparency and collaboration.

II.   Key Achievements

Review & Feedback on 2023-24 Academic Program Assessment Reports

The Council facilitated the review and provision of improvement-oriented feedback for 183 Academic Program Assessment Reports (APAR) from 2023-24. As in prior years, the Council conducted its review by forming nine interdisciplinary review groups and evaluating approximately 20 reports per group. In order to do so in an informed, equitable manner with inter-rater reliability between groups, the Council reviewed and revised the feedback rubric collaboratively. The approved, updated rubric now includes more explicit definitions of report requirements to norm expectations across reviewers, clear criteria for meeting different rubric levels, and standardized feedback statements aligned to rubric levels. These features are supplemented with space for more open-ended feedback to tailored advice to the needs of specific programs. Final feedback from the Council was delivered to programs in Spring 2025 for consideration in advance of the 2024-25 reporting cycle.

Moving forward, the Council plans to improve the review process by forming discipline-specific review groups (rather than interdisciplinary) to enhance reviewers' ability to provide more substantive feedback on the content of programs' reports.

Revised 2024-25 Academic Program Assessment Reporting Process

The bulk of the Council's work this year centered on improving the APAR process for future academic years. This involved several in-depth discussions on the obstacles programs and assessment coordinators currently face when engaging in assessment and reporting results and an exploration of potential solutions. In addition to the feedback provided during standing meetings and formal Council votes, members were also invited to provide anonymous feedback in the 2024 Assessment Process Feedback Survey. As a result of the results, the Council and the Office of Educational Effectiveness (OEE) implemented the following changes to the APAR process moving forward:

- Reduced jargon by providing assessment coordinators with clearer definitions, response prompts, and resources directly in the report template.

- Refocused the report on the importance of clear and measurable Program Learning Objectives (PLOs), as these are the foundation of a coherent assessment plan.

- Included a new report field where programs can describe their "Benchmark Rationale" to provide more context for their performance targets and why they are appropriate for their discipline or degree level.

- Included a new report field where programs can describe their "Assessment Approach" to provide more context on the kinds of programmatic assessments used at SBU.

- Included a new, optional report field for programs to assess and track non-academic program outcomes data, such as information on career or internship placement, admissions and retention, faculty research productivity, etc.

- To ensure transparency, accuracy, and collaboration, an attestation statement will be added, allowing assessment coordinators to acknowledge upon submission of the annual report that faculty members were consulted, relevant course data was utilized, and the analysis of that data was shared and reviewed by the respective faculty.

- Provided feedback on the OEE Content Management System (CMS), a web-based platform for APAR submission that will replace the use of google docs beginning with the 2024-25 report due September 30, 2025.

Moving forward, the Council will continue exploring how to ensure that programs are collecting useful, actionable data and using that data to improve the student learning experience. It will also discuss how to promote greater collaboration between assessment coordinators and department/program faculty in the collection and analysis of assessment data.

General Education Assessment
Continuing with the approved plan to assess general education under a staggered approach, the Council advised OEE on its assessment of Stony Brook Curriculum (SBC) general education categories SBS, QPS, ESI, SPK, HFA+ through guided conversations. In addition to these direct assessment measures, the Council provided key input into indirect assessments of the SBC through a series of focus groups. The Council contributed to the creation and selection of focus group questions, participant sampling methods, and timing of focus groups for underclassmen, upperclassmen, and faculty members. Overall, this culminated in an assessment of five SBC categories across 93 course sections through conversations with 74 faculty members and yielded data on 16,551 duplicated students. It also used qualitative data from a student survey, 15 student focus groups, and 4 faculty focus groups (totaling 45 participants).

OEE will provide the Council with the 2024-25 general education assessment results in early Fall 2025. The Council will continue exploring how to measure students' growth in learning from entry to exit in the SBC courses (rather than solely their endpoint), in acknowledgement that students come to SBU with varying levels of preparedness for the SBC curriculum.

Assessment Events & Recognition
The Council supported the development of a culture of assessment by promoting, supporting, and attending the third annual Assessment Symposium on October 30, 2024, which featured Council member, David Rubenstein, as the facilitator of an interactive activity. The event was well attended and received

overwhelmingly positive feedback from attendees.

The Council also fulfilled its responsibility to develop and sponsor a University-wide recognition program for the assessment of student learning by promoting and attending the third annual Assessment Recognition Event and managing the [Excellence in Educational Effectiveness (EEE) Award](#) process. As part of this responsibility, the Council updated the nominee evaluation rubric to emphasize the nominee's impact on student learning improvement. In addition, the Council opted to make the [rubric publicly accessible](#) on the OEE website to improve transparency and communication about eligibility requirements.

Ultimately, the Council received 15 nominations (nine faculty and six staff) and provided the Office of the Provost with a ranked list of finalists for consideration. The Provost selected [seven award winners](#), including five faculty and two staff members. Award recipients were formally recognized at the Assessment Recognition Event hosted on April 30, 2025.

Student Assessment Council
The Council began to collaborate with the newly formed Student Assessment Council (SAC), a student-led group and internship program that aims to amplify the student voice and perspective in the assessment process. SAC co-chairs presented their progress to the Council in Spring 2025 and began a dialogue about how the two groups can work together to increase student agency in assessment and improve student learning outcomes in the future.

Council Membership and Chair
Due to planned membership term rotations and other changes in members' availability, the Council currently has four open faculty spots for the 2025-26 academic year, including one representative from the School of Communication & Journalism and three representatives from the College of Arts & Sciences. A vacancy for the College of Business has already been filled. Selection of new members will take place during Summer 2025 with outreach to Deans and the Provost as needed. As Dr. Deborah Zelizer's term as Council Chair from 2024-25 comes to a close, the Council voted to elect Dr. David Rubenstein as the 2025-26 Chair. Dr. Zelizer will continue to serve as a representative for the School of Health Professions for the remainder of her term.

III.   Outlook for 2025-26

As the Council fulfill its charge into the 2025-26 academic year, it has identified the following priorities to focus its work:

- On a volunteer basis, include Council members in OEE consultations with academic programs to provide a faculty perspective on their assessment processes.

- Continue to refine the academic program annual reporting process in the OEE Content Management System with guidance and input from the Council.

- Continue to refine the review and feedback provided to programs on their academic program annual report to provide more substantive guidance for improvement.

- Continue to educate the campus community on how the academic program annual reports and the Department/Program Review processes differ from and complement one another.

- Emphasize the importance of using assessment data to drive programmatic improvement, support student learning, and ensure programs 'close the loop.'

- Promote a culture of assessment that rewards change, innovation, transparency, and collaboration and is not perceived as punitive or administratively overbearing.