



**Oregon Institute of Technology**

***Ad Hoc* Report**  
**Addressing Recommendations 3–5**  
**From 2016 Year Seven Peer Evaluation**



**Prepared for the**  
**Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU)**

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## Introduction

In its Year Seven Peer Evaluation in Spring 2016, NWCCU reaffirmed Oregon Tech’s accreditation while providing several recommendations surrounding institutional assessment and decision-making and requiring that Oregon Tech report on its progress in these areas in Spring 2019. We have come to summarize and understand these critiques in the following way—NWCCU identified that improvement was needed in:

- **Doing assessment in a systematic and participatory way** (Recommendation 4): “The Evaluation Committee recommends that Oregon Tech engage in a regular, systematic, participatory, self-reflective, and evidence-based assessment of its accomplishments. (Standard 5.A.1)”
- **Using assessment data to inform institutional decision-making** (Recommendation 3): “The Evaluation Committee recommends that Oregon Tech utilize planning and assessment effectively to guide Core Theme enactment, decision making, resource allocation and capacity, and engage and enable input by constituents. (Standard 4.B.1)”
- **Reviewing assessment processes to ensure they are meaningful** (Recommendation 5): “The Evaluation Committee recommends that Oregon Tech regularly review its assessment processes to ensure they appraise authentic achievements and yield meaningful results that lead to improvement (Standard 4.A.6)”<sup>1</sup>

These items, recommendations 3–5 in the Year Seven Peer Evaluation, all intersect with the reflective narrative on institutional effectiveness and assessment processes in Oregon Tech’s Mid-Cycle Self-Evaluation Report (which is also referenced throughout this document). Based on the accompanying narrative in the Year Seven Peer Evaluation, we understand these critiques to apply to assessment processes at several levels (referenced throughout our responses), particularly:

- **Core Themes Assessment:** Assessment of institution-level key performance indicators, conducted in a manner broadly engaged with the entire institution, and used to inform institution-level decisions on budget, planning, resource allocation, etc.
- **Learning Outcomes Assessment:** Assessment of student fulfillment of programmatic or institutional learning outcomes to inform improvement of curricula, courses, and pedagogy, conducted primarily by faculty.
- **Unit-Level Assessment:** Assessment of the efficacy or functioning of individual units within the institution, both academic and non-academic, with a lens that may include, but is not limited to, student learning and achievement.

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<sup>1</sup> In Oregon Tech’s six-step assessment framework for learning outcomes assessment (Design/Define, Collect, Analyze, Engage, Evaluate, Reflect), the first recommendation can loosely be thought of as connected with the first three steps of this process (Design/Define, Collect, Analyze); the second can be thought of as linked with the next (Engage), and the final recommendation is linked with the final steps (Evaluate, Reflect). Therefore, in this report, we have re-ordered these from the order in which they were presented in the NWCCU Year Seven Peer Evaluation for the sake of logical flow.

## Systematic Assessment Processes (Recommendation 4)

*“The Evaluation Committee recommends that Oregon Tech engage in a regular, systematic, participatory, self-reflective, and evidence-based assessment of its accomplishments. (Standard 5.A.1)”*

### Core Themes Assessment: Beginning a Core Themes Assessment Plan

The launch of Oregon Tech’s Core Themes Assessment Plan<sup>2</sup> reflects a new effort to develop a systematic and participatory process of assessing Oregon Tech’s accomplishments and driving action in support of them. In particular, this plan is:

- **Regular and systematic:** As the initial review of indicators to be completed over the remainder of the 2018–2019 academic year, indicators will be slotted into an annual cycle for collection and initial reflection based on the natural cycle on which data becomes available.
- **Participatory:** This process is designed to be actively engaged with the university entities most closely connected with each Core Themes indicator, and to have participatory elements data on performance on each of these indicators and reflected on beyond this group with engaging stakeholders ranging from students, faculty, and staff all the way up to the Board of Trustees and contributions to both data analysis and development of action plans
- **Self-reflective:** Built into the Core Themes Indicator Template is a process to not only collect Oregon Tech’s current level of performance on each indicator, but to prompt reflection on whether indicators are measureable, meaningful and actionable, whether action has occurred in response to identified deficiencies, whether that action has been effective at yielding improvement, and whether the process as a whole serves the institution well.
- **Evidence-based:** Every goal identified as a Core Themes Indicator is structured as an ongoing measure that can be efficiently and reliably collected both for formal annual review, and for availability to stakeholders across the university at any time as a resource to support decision-making. This approach is reflective of ongoing performance analysis, rather than being centered on one-time strategic initiatives or activities.

### Learning Outcomes Assessment: Broadening Reflective Discussion

New elements have recently been introduced<sup>3</sup> into Oregon Tech’s processes for both program-level learning outcomes assessment and institution-level learning outcomes assessment which make them more broadly participatory and therefore better reflections of institution-wide process, as well as more effective drivers of improvement activities. These include:

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<sup>2</sup> Described in Part I of Oregon Tech’s Mid-Cycle Self-Assessment Report.

<sup>3</sup> These elements are also elaborated throughout Part II of Oregon Tech’s Mid-Cycle Self-Assessment Report.

- **ESLO cycle and ESLO committees:** Oregon Tech’s new six-year cycle for assessment inherently engages a broader set of faculty in its execution than past academic assessment practices. Prior to the adoption of this cycle, activity surrounding assessment of institutional student learning outcomes was driven almost exclusively by the Assessment Executive Committee on a cycle of one year per outcome. With the engagement of interdisciplinary faculty ESLO committees, and the identification of centers of action beyond just the Assessment Executive Committee, but explicitly including the Commission on College Teaching (CCT) and General Education Advisory Committee (GEAC), the opportunity for input has increased, as has the number of centers for action involved in development and executing an improvement plan after initial analysis of assessment data. Additionally, the more relaxed timeline allows for greater and more thoughtful opportunities for connection, reflection, and planning, particularly within the “Analyze,” “Engage,” “Evaluate,” and “Reflect” years. Further work remains to more deeply engage senior academic leadership in this work and coordinate activity with their involvement, particularly in the “Analyze,” and “Engage” portions of the process.
- **“Active” assessment sessions at Convocation:** Every year, as a part of Oregon Tech’s fall Convocation, the Assessment Executive Committee gives a one-hour presentation to the entire faculty. Previously, these sessions have primarily been a “report out” from assessment leadership on the past year’s results from ESLO assessment and prior year’s action plans. Beginning in Fall 2017, these sessions have been restructured to be far more participatory, with the bulk of time allocated to faculty reflecting on groups on the data collected during the previous year, interpreting that data (identifying trends and patterns, postulating explanations for results seen), and brainstorming potential actions (both in pedagogy and curriculum and in improvements to the assessment process). These have introduced new participatory and reflective elements into the process, and provided input that is reviewed by and helps drive the actions of groups such as the ESLO committees and the Commission on College Teaching as they develop improvement activities.
- **Program Assessment Report Review.** In the past two academic years, the Assessment Executive Committee has redoubled its efforts to better support and broaden discussion around best practices for program learning outcomes assessment. In particular, by inviting program assessment coordinators to participate in the program assessment report review, held each winter term, we have begun to better communicate expectations for program-level assessment. Most importantly, this new process has created opportunities for program assessment coordinators to see and learn from best practices in other programs, and has allowed assessment leadership to identify and respond to areas of strengths and weaknesses in program assessment activity.

### Unit-Level Assessment: Drafting Program and Non-Academic Unit Review Processes

During the past academic year, two parallel review processes – Academic Program Review and Administrative Unit (Non-Academic Departments; Student Affairs has a separate process; outlined below) Review – have been drafted in order to move Oregon Tech towards structures that provide systematic, evidence-based evaluation of programs that extends beyond learning outcomes assessment

and that can be used to support decision making, resource allocation, and continuous improvement. In this section, we summarize the broad outline of these draft processes, with an understanding that the process draft will continue to evolve in conversation with academic and non-academic leadership at all levels.

Both of these processes begin with a self-study of the program/department at the unit level and later within the institutional context, asking the program or unit to collect and analyze data which demonstrate how they are seeking to meet their strategic goals in alignment with the university mission, core themes, and strategic plan. Each unit will work with the appropriate Vice President to determine the particular metrics and procedures by which the self-study is to be coordinated and conducted. On the academic side, this includes examination of instructional effectiveness and student progress towards program outcomes, as well as demonstration that a program is attuned to market needs and professional practice in its field.

Self-studies will be handed off to an appropriate Program Review Committee – either the Accreditation Steering Committee or another university body determined by university leadership – which may, in a consultative manner, request further data and which will formulate recommendations for program or department vitality and sustainability. These recommendations will then be shared with the appropriate university leadership, from the unit head up through the University President, with the charge to allocate resources to effectively implement those actions. Progress in implementation will be monitored periodically throughout the review cycle with appropriate steps taken as needed to ensure success.

These processes will follow a five or six-year review cycle (with exceptions made for academic programs whom already follow similar processes driven by external accrediting agencies such as ABET and IACEB) with appropriate milestones or focused mini-reviews during the cycle period, as driven by the recommendations of the previous review. All processes will involve constituent input and require the participation of all members of the unit (e.g., faculty, staff, department chair, etc.). Where appropriate (particularly for academic programs), these processes are envisioned as engaging an external review team.

The roll-out of this process will begin in the 2019-20 academic year for both academic and non-academic units, on a timeline for each unit driven by the appropriate Vice Presidents. For academic programs, the draft process will continue to be refined in such a way that it is integrated alongside current program academic assessment processes to ensure that both processes work in harmony and to reduce unnecessary duplication of effort.

### Unit-Level Assessment: Student Affairs Assessment

The Student Affairs division values its role and the services provided to support student learning needs and the effectiveness of the institution. Each department within Student Affairs has a mission that is formally articulated and aligns with the overall university mission. These goals are included in departmental assessment plans, the purpose of which is to evaluate the department's efforts to serve students and work towards improving those services. Some assessments are completed annually, while others are on a three-year cycle; these are documented within each Student Affairs unit's annual report.

Performance data is collected in a variety of ways, depending on the department—for instance, the Integrated Student Health Center tracks patient satisfaction via post-visit surveys, while the Peer Consulting Center monitors usage by tracking the number and type of appointments.

Currently, data is being collected from all Student Affairs departments to begin cross-departmental analysis to see where students are using services across the campus and to evaluate possible implications. Student Affairs leadership are also currently participating in professional development surrounding assessment in anticipation of the further formalization of student affairs assessment structures in the future. The evolution of these processes has not yet been formally defined, but will be informed by alignment with the university-level structures described elsewhere in this report.

## Connecting Assessment to Decision-Making (Recommendation 3)

“The Evaluation Committee Recommends that Oregon Tech utilize planning and assessment effectively to guide Core Theme enactment, decision making, resource allocation and capacity, and engage and enable input by constituents. (Standard 4.B.1)”

### Integration of Short-Term Goals with Budget Build Processes

Upon Dr. Naganathan’s arrival at Oregon Tech in April 2017, Oregon Tech initiated a short-term planning process intended to focus institutional efforts over the span of the first two years of his new administration as the university moved towards a more comprehensive long-term strategic planning processes. The Short-Term Action Plan was developed initially through a day-long retreat in which dozens of members of the university community were invited to participate, and was distilled by a representative committee of faculty and administration before final refinement by President Naganathan and endorsement by the Board of Trustees. This Short-Term Action Plan has helped to drive and focus institutional investments and resource allocations during the past two years. Oregon Tech intends<sup>4</sup> for these same budgetary processes to be adapted to support implementation of a longer-term, data-driven strategic plan that relies on key performance indicators to help drive institutional resource allocation.

This groundwork for this process has begun with numerous new budgetary and planning processes implemented under the direction of the Vice President for Finance and Administration and the Assistant Vice President for Budget and Planning. As part these processes, Oregon Tech has now established a monthly management report for all Education and General (operating fund) budgets. This report includes a year-to-date (YTD) actual and comparison with prior year YTD performance as well as forecasts revenues and expenses to the end of the fiscal year. Forecasts are updated throughout the year by aggregating expected results along with qualitative and quantitative feedback from department and divisional budget owners. These reports, along with monthly cash flow forecasts, are issued quarterly to the Board of Trustees and monthly to the Chair of the Board’s Finance and Facilities

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<sup>4</sup> This is described in Part III of Oregon Tech’s Mid-Cycle Self-Assessment Report.

Committee, the Vice President of Finance and Administration, and the President. This represents a marked improvement as two years ago the university had no system in place to reconcile budgets, forecast year-end performance, or inform mid-year course corrections.

Over the past three years, the university has completed or begun over \$65M in capital projects, an amount rivaling, if not surpassing, the prior decade's total capital construction at Oregon Tech. In support of these efforts, Oregon Tech has also implemented a monthly capital project tracking report, with quarterly reports going to the Board of Trustees and monthly reports to the Chair of the Finance and Facilities Committee of the Board. This includes the project stage, budget, timeline to completion, and any change orders or amendments. This allows executive level oversight and transparency in project management and delivery.

The budget build process has seen particular evolution over the past several fiscal years. Prior to 2017, budgets were almost exclusively built as a direct rollover from the previous year without broad consultation with academic departments or administrative units. The Budget and Planning Office now meets with major departments and divisions on a monthly basis (and smaller units on a quarterly basis) to understand their current year results, operating and capital spend plans, vacancies, hiring needs and expected hire dates. This information allows for a "build-up" year-end forecast instead of simply a top down ratio-driven forecast model, although though estimates of prior year spend rates are still used as benchmarks for testing department feedback.

A newly implemented budget model, developed in collaboration with campus stakeholders, particularly the FOAC (Fiscal Operations Advisory Council), rolled out in the 2017–2018 academic year. This model now begins at the unit level with individual departments and divisions drafting and justifying their budgetary requests; those budget builds are then rolled up through the supervisory chain. Divisional executives are responsible for submitting prioritized budgets and meeting budget targets. This new model also includes elements that reduce the incentive for units to take a "use it or lose it" approach to their budget. Departments, colleges and the Provost's Office can now bank a portion of the prior year's savings for future investments. This process was rolled out for the first time to develop the 2018–2019 university budget.

The increased discipline being created in budget management through the monthly and quarterly check-ins with Budget and Planning, and through quarterly reviews with the Vice President of Finance and Administration, has allowed the university to actively reallocate resources across the university within and across fiscal years. This speeds up execution of new initiatives and increases the effectiveness of forward-looking budget planning. The remaining factor to be incorporated is overload and adjunct budgeting linked with course demand and faculty workload. This will be rolled out as Academic Affairs increases its assessment and planning capability and moves to implement a year-long course calendar and multi-year course planning linked with enrollment trends.

These processes have enabled Oregon Tech to respond to President Naganathan's Short-Term Action Plan within the development of the 2018–2019 budget. The short-term goals provided guidance in prioritization of budgetary adjustments; out of \$5.1M in budgetary adjustments made during the build of the 2018–2019 budget, over \$2.8M directly support one of these 11 goals.

Examples of particular investments aligned with Short-Term Action Plan goals include:

- \$104,440 was allocated to the creation of the Faculty Innovation Center, a demonstration classroom environment intended for faculty to use to test out new instructional technologies, supporting Short-Term Goal 5: Extend Academic Planning.
- \$311,000 in funds were allocated to campus beautification projects, including tree planting/landscaping, painting campus handrails, building upgrades and other investments, in support of Short-Term Goal 7: Build our Culture of Pride.
- \$249,121 was allocated to the development of the Applied Behavior Analysis clinic an integral element of a new master's degree program in Applied Behavior Analysis within the Humanities and Social Sciences department, supporting Short-Term Goal 11: Leverage Academic and Industry Partnerships.

Continued extension of the new budget process into the budget build in coming years, as planned by the Budget and Planning Office, will include implementation of explicit budgeting for computing and library resources linked with departmental and programmatic needs, "opportunity funds" held by academic leadership, and gain-sharing elements with incentives for revenue growth within individual units.

### Core Themes Assessment: Integration with Budget Build and Decision-Making

Oregon Tech recognizes that the development of improved institutional assessment processes (with meaningful indicators) and the development of improved budgeting processes is happening in parallel, with the ultimate goal of their alignment into a single, seamless process.

Merely prompting units to provide data on key indicators and to reflect on that data has already begun to encourage action: Career Services data has begun to share more widely with academic departments and faculty, the Strategic Enrollment Management Unit has developed additional processes to bolster recruitment and target weaknesses in retention; the Library has initiated strategic discussions which look to link their unit goals and institutional priorities to metrics which will spur success.<sup>5</sup>

Moving forward, there are several key decision-making processes where performance on Core Themes Indicators should drive action.<sup>6</sup> Most notably, these are:

- Within the institutional budget build process. Just as the Short-Term Action Plan has driven priorities in the 2018–2019 budget build, data on institutional performance relative to key indicators (and action items identified to address deficiencies) should replace these short term goals in future years.
- Within position prioritization and equipment request processes. Formal processes for academic position requests and equipment procurement have been created institutionally,

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<sup>5</sup> See Part I of Oregon Tech's Mid-Cycle Self-Assessment Report.

<sup>6</sup> See Part III of Oregon Tech's Mid-Cycle Self-Assessment Report – "Integration Into Institutional Decision-Making Processes" and "Integration Into Lower-Level Decision-Making Processes"

and the justifications requested of departments in each of these processes already call ask for alignment with the requesting unit’s strategic plan. As these processes are further refined, these elements can be adapted to more explicitly point to key institutional or departmental indicators as part of the justification for a decision and the rubrics used to rank such requests.

Consistent with the philosophy of allocating resources towards strategically appropriate and viable initiatives based on sound data, Oregon Tech has also initiated a revised new program approval process over the past two academic years. In particular, this new process strengthens the initial elements of market analysis and fiscal viability prior to a formal approval to proceed being given to the proposing department to begin formal curriculum development. These processes both better ensure the viability and sustainability of academic programs before they are launched and alert other key stakeholders for input. In addition, the Provost’s Office has provided additional resources to support program development in these early phases—for instance, as new program development activity is increasingly supported through the Provost’s Office Summer Creativity Grant program.

### Learning Outcomes Assessment: Improved Connections to Action

New processes associated with learning outcomes assessment are intended in part to better drive action stemming from faculty reflection on student work:

- **Six-Year ESLO Assessment Cycle<sup>7</sup>:** With the launch of the six-year cycle for assessment of Oregon Tech’s institution-wide Essential Student Learning Outcomes (ESLO), we have explicitly built in both time within the process dedicated to planning for, implementing, and evaluating improvement actions—the Analyze, Engage, and Evaluate years of the process. Additionally, we have explicitly built in connections with the General Education Advisory Commission (GEAC) and the Commission on College Teaching (CCT) within this process to provide additional conduits for action, whether in curriculum or in pedagogy and faculty development. Finally, the ESLO committees themselves provide continuity for this work over multiple years and a body of faculty invested in and charged with steering improvement activity connecting with each of their associated outcomes. Work remains to better-coordinate this activity with the involvement of senior academic leadership, who can better advocate for bringing resources to bear where needed.
- **Program Assessment Report Rubric:** Within Oregon Tech’s new guide for academic program assessment reports, specific elements leading to action are now explicitly called out as elements that are expected and evaluated within our program assessment report review process. These elements include expectations that programs will:
  - Document how assessment results are shared with faculty and other stakeholders, and how interpretation of results is done with broad engagement.
  - Identify specific (not general or abstract) improvement actions that directly connect with assessment findings, particularly if performance falls below benchmarks.

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<sup>7</sup> See Part II of Oregon Tech’s Mid-Cycle Self-Assessment Report – “Communication ESLO”

- Clearly identify centers of responsibility and timelines for action on improvement activities.
- Identify alignments between improvement actions and budgetary allocations or resources requests. (This will also require administrative movement to align resource request processes to be informed by the needs identified through learning outcomes assessment.)

## Reviewing Assessment Processes (Recommendation 5)

*“The Evaluation Committee recommends that Oregon Tech regularly review its assessment processes to ensure they appraise authentic achievements and yield meaningful results that lead to improvement (Standard 4.A.6)”*

Oregon Tech has made progress towards regularly reviewing assessment processes through several activities begun since the receipt of the Year Seven Peer Evaluation in Spring 2016. Discussion of this weakness in that evaluation touched on both elements of Core Theme assessment and on learning outcomes assessment; improvements in both of these areas are described below.

### Core Themes Assessment: Examination of Core Themes Indicators

The commentary that Oregon Tech has not engaged in a broad, participatory process of regular evaluation of indicators associated with Core Themes is correct. The Core Themes Assessment Plan now being put into place includes explicit components designed to ensure that indicators are measurable, meaningful, and actionable.<sup>8</sup>

We expect that many of these indicators will be revised and improved through this process, and that the entire set of indicators will be refined in conjunction with an institution-wide strategic planning process. We recognize that the effort of maintaining relevance of indicators and ensuring continued efficacy of an assessment plan is ongoing, and that is why, just as with the ESLO assessment cycle above, the Core Themes Indicator Template includes explicit components prompting this reflection.<sup>9</sup> The regular dialogues planned with Executive Staff and the Board of Trustees, as well as those with faculty, staff, and students, will ensure that these measures stay relevant and that there is transparency and accountability for improvement activity.

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<sup>8</sup> See the examples in Part I of Oregon Tech’s Mid-Cycle Self-Assessment (particularly in Table 1) for an illustration of how the Core Themes Indicator Template has supported these discussion.

<sup>9</sup> See Appendix B of Oregon Tech’s Mid-Cycle Self-Assessment for this template.

Furthermore, this reflection is not limited to the data collection and definitions of indicators; the Core Themes Indicator Template includes explicitly reflective components alongside each stage of the process to validate that the process as a whole is meaningful, broadly engaged, and results in action. Developing dashboards that reflect not merely the status of indicators themselves, but the status of work on each element of the assessment process (Design, Collect, Analyze, Engage, Evaluate, Reflect), will help to ensure that the meaningfulness of the process and its connections to action are continuing priorities.<sup>10</sup>

Although this work is still in its early stages, it represents a sustainable process for reflection on the quality of institution-level Core Themes assessment to ensure that the achievements documented are authentically valued by stakeholders at all levels and result in action leading to improved performance.

### Learning Outcomes Assessment: Implementation of New ESLO Assessment Cycle

In 2015–2016, following the adoption of a new set of six institution-wide Essential Student Learning Outcomes (ESLOs) for bachelor’s degree programs, the Assessment Executive Committee initiated a new, staggered, six-year cycle for assessment of these outcomes.

Under Oregon Tech’s prior set of Institutional Student Learning Outcomes (ISLO), one or two of Oregon Tech’s eight outcomes were assessed in each year of a six-year cycle. This cycle typically resulted in a rapid-paced assessment process, with assessment methodology developed, courses identified, work collected and scored, results analyzed, and improvement plans begun, all within the space of roughly a year and a half (from one spring term to the subsequent fall). Moreover, this work was carried out primarily by the Assessment Executive Committee, with broadening of the work beyond this group often a challenge.

The new assessment cycle runs each outcome through one step of the assessment cycle each year. This process draws on the added resource of the faculty outcome committees that helped to develop and define these outcomes as part of Oregon Tech’s comprehensive general education review.

- **Design:** Develop data collection plan.
- **Collect:** Identify and score student work.
- **Analyze:** Uncover patterns in data and plan improvement activity.
- **Engage:** Implement improvement activity university-wide.
- **Evaluate:** Assess the success of these improvement activities.
- **Reflect:** Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the assessment process.

In this cycle, work centers around the ESLO committee each year. Work is distributed temporally in a more manageable manner, and other groups (academic departments, the Assessment Executive Committee, the Commission on College Teaching, the General Education Advisory Commission) are engaged as needed. For instance, during the Engage year, the ESLO committee might collaborate with

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<sup>10</sup> See Part III of Oregon Tech’s Mid-Cycle Self-Assessment – “Execute Plan and Engage Stakeholders”

the Commission on College Teaching (the faculty committee charged with advancing innovative and effective teaching practices) on activities to support faculty in better teaching to an particular outcome.

In addition to being far more sustainable and manageable in implementation, this structure has produced two major benefits with respect to reflection on assessment practices.

First, this structure explicitly builds in time for and a charge for reflection on the effectiveness of assessment work during the Evaluate and Reflect years of the cycle. For example, the Diverse Perspectives ESLO committee, the first group to go through the “Evaluate” stage, is currently evaluating NSSE and other data to determine if intervention activities implemented during the previous year had the desired impact.

Second, the new structure enables assessment processes for each outcome to be informed by the successes and weaknesses of the outcomes that preceded it in the cycle. For example, reflections from the Analyze year of the Communication ESLO in 2017–2018 revealed that faculty viewed the data generated on that outcome as suspect because of perceived differences in how different faculty applied the scoring rubric; this informed the design of the Ethical Reasoning ESLO assessment plan that same year, leading faculty to include collaborative scoring as a key approach to improving data quality and facilitating interdisciplinary conversation and exchange of ideas.

### [Learning Outcomes Assessment: Launch of Program Assessment Report Review](#)

In Oregon Tech’s Year Seven Peer Evaluation, evaluators noted that “members of the Assessment Commission characterized their review of program reports as ‘soft,’ suggesting relatively superficial and infrequent reflection on these reports.”

In response to this observation, as well as to newly-released NWCCU rubrics identifying systematic review of program assessment activity as a critical element, the Assessment Executive Committee launched a new program assessment report review process in January 2018. This process also helped assessment staff and faculty assessment leadership evaluate the efficacy of Oregon Tech’s LiveText assessment software, which had been recently put into place as the required mechanism through which programs submitted program assessment reports.

This review began with the use of an assessment report rubric taken directly from James Madison University’s Center for Assessment & Research Studies. Recognizing that it was a good, but not perfect fit for Oregon Tech’s assessment processes, it nevertheless provided an opportunity to hold Oregon Tech’s program assessment work up against a national model. Members of the Assessment Executive Committee and program assessment coordinators met to score program assessment reports over six hours of sessions during Winter term—first collectively, and then in small groups as comfort with the rubric increased. The majority of reports were scored by faculty teams using this process; assessment staff and faculty leadership scored the remaining reports.

As part of this process, programs received both feedback on their assessment reports in both quantitative (rubric scores) and qualitative (written feedback) forms. Each program was given three key

areas to work on for their next annual report to improve their own assessment processes. Examination of areas of strengths and weaknesses in scoring also enabled the Assessment Executive Committee to identify areas to emphasize with program assessment coordinators collectively. Areas identified for improvement in the 2018-2019 program assessment activity included broadening both scoring and discussion of student work amongst program faculty, and encouraging greater specificity and accountability for improvement activities.

Finally, reflections on the JMU program assessment report rubric during its use helped to crystallize for assessment leadership areas where Oregon Tech could use further development. In particular, noting weaknesses in areas where the LiveText assessment software was particularly constrictive or limited in its ability to support extended narrative reflection supported the Assessment Executive Committee to switch assessment software away from LiveText (and a requirement that all programs must submit reports in it) and to Portfolium (as a voluntary tool to support those programs who found it an effective resource) for the 2018–2019 academic year. Finally, this work prompted the development of a program assessment report guide for programs—the first that had been provided in a number of years—including examples drawn from current assessment reports and a revised Oregon Tech program assessment report rubric drawing upon the JMU rubric, NWCCU rubrics and standards, and other best practices. This rubric is being used during the Winter 2019 term to evaluate 2017–2018 program assessment reports in a similar manner.

## Results Leading to Improvement

In each of the three examples presented in this section (launch of the Core Themes Assessment Plan, launch of a new ESLO cycle, and launch of Program Report Review), the primary improvements Oregon Tech is currently able to demonstrate are changes in process – providing better scaffolding around assessment processes, supporting new conduits for dissemination of information and plans, etc. We acknowledge that these processes are not yet, for the most part, at the point of generating results that “lead to improvement” in student achievement that we can point to as stemming from the activities prompted by this assessment work (although several academic programs are beginning to achieve this in their program assessment activity)

We are, however, firmly on the road. Our six-step assessment cycle (design, collect, analyze, engage, evaluate, reflect), as embedded within each of the processes we have described in this report, provides the framework to eventually reach this point. Our refinement of these processes, as well as institutional decision-making processes, is underway with this end goal in mind. We welcome NWCCU’s focused and continued guidance as we continue in this work, for the benefit of our students.