School: School of Arts and Sciences (SAS)

1. Did the SAS report adequately describe any changes made in the past year to school-wide learning outcome assessment plans or its leadership and articulate any changes in program- or department-wide learning outcome assessment processes?

   The report states that there was a major change made to the school-wide assessment procedure in the period under review. A new learning outcome assessment rubrics was piloted. (Made available in an appendix). In Summer 2022 this rubric was used by the Assessment Committee, and other school-wide officers to rate departmental assessment reports. This worked well, and the Assessment Committee is considering sharing exemplary reports with other departments and programs.

   The report presents considerable detail on the findings concerning assessment across the programs and departments within SAS.

2. Did the SAS report adequately describe any changes made in school-wide learning goals in the past year, and why such changes were made. Were examples given illustrating changes in program- or department-wide learning goals and explaining the reasons for doing so?

   The report states that there were no changes to the school-wide learning goals. It is also stated that few programs made any updates to their learning goals. As the report notes, this is to be expected since the disciplines represented by the SAS programs and departments change slowly as compared to a yearly assessment cycle. The Office of Undergraduate Education within SAS works directly with departments that intend to change their learning goals, providing advice and support.

3. Did the SAS report adequately describe any measured changes in student performance in achieving desired learning outcomes during the past year? Did the report show which assessment results were used to motivate the changes, especially results from direct assessment of student learning? Were applicable licensing exam results provided? Did the report adequately describe how these measured changes will be addressed, either through efforts to improve any declines that have been detected, or to build upon any improvements noticed?

As the report notes, given the size and complexity of SAS itself, it is no surprise that a number of programs found changes in student performance in one direction or another, and made efforts to improve student outcomes wherever necessary. A significant issue, and one that has been raised in the assessment reports of many other schools, is the decline is student motivation, usually accompanied by less student engagement with the courses and curricula. In some cases, this was evidenced by students ceasing to attend class or to stop participation in class though attending. This widespread event was addressed in a number of ways within departments, and also by SAS itself through panel discussions, workshops, and the like.

Another important issue was the expression of concern by students, often at the invitation of the department, that their learning was not leading in a direct manner to their future careers. Some of the evidence for this concern was collected by programs and department through student surveys or meetings. The response to this student concern is multi-faceted, including joint work with the Career Explorations and Success office, especially in the humanities disciplines, and efforts by the Office of Undergraduate Education to work with departments to integrate career-readiness and various skills into the learning goals of the departments themselves. This is a very laudable effort. One expects that SAS will find ways to incorporate obvious job-skills, such as facility with spreadsheets and the graphic visualization of data into the learning goals of a number of department where such skills are not usually treated in any formal instructional manner.

4. Did the SAS report adequately explain whether or not the availability of syllabi and learning goals on school, program, and/or departmental web sites been maintained over the past year?

As the report notes, SAS makes a significant and successful effort to make syllabi and learning goals, and sometimes course synopses, available publicly, usually through program and department websites.

5.Was any additional information concerning assessment and related topics shared in the report?

The report presents a vast array of additional information, including sample assessment rubrics used by the Assessment Committee, comments on major issues, such as student engagement and motivation, and plans to address these concerns by SAS and its Office of Undergraduate Education. The repot also presents the results of the internal SAS program and department assessment practice based on the rubrics mentioned.

Conclusion: This is an an impressive and comprehensive presentation of the significant effort and commitment of resources for the assessment of learning outcomes within SAS. It, as usual, is an example for all other schools in the institution of how to do learning outcome assessment effectively, sustainably and coherently across a large and diverse group of programs and departments. The SAS learning outcome assessment process is also responsive and forward looking at the school level. The Office of Undergraduate Education and the Assessment Committee and able to use the results of the assessment process itself, besides the actual evidence collected, to coordinate activities to address issues and problems that have arisen in the past few years. Most notable here, is the effort to face up to the documented loss of motivation and engagement among students. This is an issue of national concern, and SAS is facing it 'head-on'. This itself is a laudable effort.