

**Salem State University
Academic Affairs Assessment Plan**

Introduction

This plan reflects a summary of academic affairs assessment activities conducted to enhance student learning, student success, and to contribute to institutional effectiveness.

Suskie (2009) defines assessment as, “the ongoing process of establishing clear, measurable expected outcomes of student learning; ensuring that students have sufficient opportunities to achieve these outcomes; systematically gathering, analyzing, and interpreting evidence to determine how well student learning matches our expectations; using the resulting information to understand and improve learning.” By articulating the assessment cycle in this definition, Suskie’s comprehensive explanation incorporates both the assessment *of* learning (e.g., outcome-oriented; accountability for what is taught/learned approach) and the assessment *for* learning (e.g., process-oriented; continual improvement approach) in her definition. In order to understand the student experience and assess the impact of the academic curriculum, the institution employs a variety of methods to measure student gains.

Institutional Assessment

Periodic assessment is the cornerstone of continual improvement. Salem State participates in a variety of national and campus surveys, administered strategically over time. Consistently applying lessons learned from data are used to enhance student learning and student satisfaction at the university. Among these instruments utilized are the National Survey of Student Engagement; Ruffalo Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Index; and Faculty Survey of Student Engagement. Many of these assessment tools provide data on current students compared to national results. A schedule of on-going assessment plans is listed below.

Assessment	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	Purpose
VALUE Institute (Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education)	X	X	X	X	X	Assessment of student learning through the General Education Curriculum
Undergraduate Program Assessment	X			X	X	Assessment of learning outcomes for each undergraduate academic program
Graduate Program Assessment	X			X	X	Assessment of learning outcomes for each graduate academic program
National Survey of Student Engagement	X		X			Assessment of undergraduate first-year and senior student engagement
Faculty Survey of Student Engagement			X			Assessment of faculty perceptions of student engagement and teaching practices
Student Satisfaction Index	X			X		Assessment of undergraduate student satisfaction and priorities

Assessment	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	Purpose
Campus Climate Survey of Students		X				Assessment of students experience of the university community
Campus Climate Survey of Employees		X				Assessment of faculty and staff experience of the university community
Graduate Student Exit Survey	X	X	X	X	X	Assessment of graduate student learning and experiences
Senior Survey		X	X	X	X	Assessment of undergraduate student learning and experiences
Map-Works Survey	X	X	X			Assessment of undergraduate student experiences; replaced in 2019-20 by EAB Navigate early warning system
Accepted Students Questionnaire	X		X			Survey of perceptions of prospective students admitted by Salem State; replaced in 2019-20 by EAB Navigate annual survey

General Education Assessment

Salem State's general education curriculum is associated with more than a dozen essential learning outcomes, as defined by the AAC&U LEAP (Liberal Education and America's Promise) Initiative. These learning outcomes include: inquiry and analysis, critical thinking, written communication, oral communication, ethical reasoning, creative thinking, synthesis, information literacy, knowledge of human cultures, intercultural knowledge and competence, quantitative literacy, knowledge of the physical and natural world, foundations and skills for lifelong learning. Moreover, the Diversity, Power Dynamics, and Social Justice (DPDS) overlay requirement ensures that students engage in a cross-cultural analysis of historical and contemporary inequities in fulfilling their general education curriculum. The DPDS requirement is associated with intercultural knowledge and competence, among other LEAP essential learning outcomes.

The general education curriculum is assessed annually through the Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education (VALUE) Institute, formerly the Multistate Collaborative (MSC) of the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU). Using VALUE rubrics, the Institute compares student artifacts as evidence to measure student gains in critical thinking, written communication, and quantitative literacy. Academic Affairs engages faculty in these assessment efforts as evaluators. Results from each campus are compared with other participating campuses to provide benchmark data.

Undergraduate Program Assessment

Each academic department conducts a program review on a consistent five-year schedule, or is accredited by a professional association, based on disciplinary requirements. The Senior Surveys provides data about students' experience in the majors. In addition, academic departments prepare annual reports to identify strengths and targets for improvement within

academic programs. Program and disciplinary learning outcomes are also reviewed annually by departmental faculty.

Graduate Program Assessment

Graduate academic programs are assessed through disciplinary accreditation standards and program reviews that are systematically conducted on a five-year cycle. Exit surveys of graduate students also provide data for the university about students' experience. In addition, academic departments prepare annual reports to identify strengths and targets for improvement within academic programs. Program and disciplinary learning outcomes are also reviewed annually by departmental faculty.

Academic Program Review

Each graduate and undergraduate academic program undergoes a periodic review in accordance with the institutionally established schedule. Programs that do not undergo external accreditation participate in a five-year schedule of program review, a process that began in 2004-05. Programs often rely on professional or disciplinary standards to measure student success and outcomes. These expectations further measure student achievement, independent learning, information literacy, and critical judgement, as relevant to the academic discipline.

Academic Accreditations

Salem State's [academic programs are individually accredited](#) by these disciplinary organizations:

- Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education;
- Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business;
- American Chemical Society;
- Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education;
- Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education;
- Computing Accreditation Commission of the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology;
- Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation;
- Council on Social Work Education;
- Joint Review Committee on Educational Programs in Nuclear Medicine Technology;
- National Association of Schools of Art and Design;
- National Association of Schools of Music;
- National Association of Schools of Theatre;
- National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education;
- UN World Tourism Association
- National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE).

The academic programs that do not have an accreditation participate in a program review, which is managed by the Board of Higher Education, every five years.

[Accreditation and Program Review Schedule](#)

Co-Curricular Assessment

Several administrative areas conduct periodic self-studies and/or external reviews. The departments who have participated most recently include admissions, admissions operations, career services, counseling and health services, financial aid, marketing and creative services, registrar, and student accounts, among others.

Student Life developed a learning curriculum to guide their educational programming. Within and beyond the classroom experience, the student life framework bridges three dimensions of learning that capture the most critical elements of student development:

- Self-authorship – students will gain the awareness and insight necessary to articulate who they are, what they need, and how it affects their relationships with others.
- Community Engagement – students will gain an awareness of their place in the community and the responsibility they have in contributing positively toward broad social issues.
- Courageous Leadership – students will serve as change agents and work collaboratively to make a positive impact on the world.

Post-Graduate Outcomes Assessment

Post-Graduate data is collected through the Senior Survey, which is administered to undergraduate students as they apply for commencement. These results provide a snapshot of student outcomes prior to graduation. Response rates were consistently near 50%, while in 2020, COVID-19 negatively impacted survey participation. In 2018 and 2019, slightly more than half of respondents reported they were seeking employment in the spring of their graduation year, the majority of whom were searching for a full-time position.

Over one-third of respondents reported they had secured a position, with the overwhelming majority of these students employed in Massachusetts. The majority of employed students reported that they were earning less than \$40,000; nearly one-third indicated a salary between \$40,000 - \$60,000; while over ten percent reported earning over \$60,000. Over two-thirds of respondents stated their intent to pursue graduate study in the next few years.

Education, nursing, business, social work, psychology, and criminal justice are among the university majors graduating the largest number of students. These programs provide the next generation of teachers, school counselors, educational administrators, social workers, entrepreneurs, business and criminal justice professionals. The over 64,000 graduates of the university contribute substantially to the Massachusetts and regional economy as local taxpayers, employees, and employers. Most graduates not only come from the Commonwealth, but 80% of alums also settle in the state after graduation, with over 40% of them living on the North Shore, and 67% living within 30 miles or less of the campus. ([Alumni Heatmap](#))

[Data Collections Schedule](#)