

Dear Colleagues,

With the Fall 2017 semester past the halfway point, I write to update you on about a number of initiatives and issues we're currently addressing:

University Core Student Learning Outcomes

Many thanks for the high level of engagement and quality of analysis in response to the first draft of the University Core Student Learning Outcomes. While there were numerous suggestions for various edits as well as more general comments, two themes within the responses stood out:

- adopting outcomes that facilitate assessment of student learning was critical
- adoption of these outcomes for University-wide use required more revisions to clarify and to better specify the scope of some of the outcomes

The concern about assessment was a welcome one, as it demonstrates the campus' maturation in terms of assessment. This echoes other signs we're seeing throughout many programs as our assessment efforts are becoming more sophisticated, more regularly implemented, and more clearly help faculty identify the need for, and potential directions of, changes in curriculum and pedagogy to improve student learning.

As for the outcomes themselves and the accompanying explanatory text, we have revised them based on the faculty input received. A few remain relatively unchanged, while others were more significantly updated to address questions/concerns. **A revised version of the outcomes document is now available on the Provost's Office website at <https://www.slu.edu/the-office-of-the-provost/communications-from-the-provost>.** You can also access it directly [here](#).

The approval process from here is as follows:

1. Deans and the Faculty Council/Faculty Assembly presidents of all colleges/schools with undergraduate programs should formally present the revised outcomes to their full faculty constituencies for review and for additional feedback (see the revised outcomes attachment, linked above, for details and instructions).
2. Additional feedback from the colleges/schools will inform another round of revision.
3. After additional revisions, a final draft will be presented to faculty councils/assemblies for a simple "Yes/No" vote on their adoption as our new University Core Student Learning Outcomes.
4. Upon adoption, the new University Undergraduate Core Curriculum Committee (UUCCC) will use the outcomes to direct the development of a new University Core Curriculum, starting with a general curriculum architecture that we hope will be completed early in the Fall 2018 semester. The outcomes and explanatory text will also be used to develop more detailed rubrics to facilitate assessment of student learning.

Director of the Core Position

Recall that once the UUCCC is formed (by mid-November), that group will solicit nominations for the Director of the Core position. The Director will be selected from among the tenured and non-tenured faculty of a SLU college/school that currently offers an undergraduate major, and will receive release time (from teaching, scholarship, and/or service expectations) and a stipend. The UUCCC will forward its recommendations for the position to me, and I will make the final appointment.

Deadlines for Progress on Assessment

As we prepare to meet the obligations of our mandatory Progress Report on Assessment for the Higher Learning Commission (due in September 2018), we established several related deadlines for academic units to demonstrate their progress. October 31, 2017 is when all units were to have adopted program learning outcomes that meet University standards (for reference, see our assessment website at: <https://www.slu.edu/the-office-of-the-provost/assessment-of-student-learning/program-level-assessment>). By December 31, all programs are to have assessment plans that meet the published standards, as well. Deans and chairs will be receiving feedback on the status of their assessment work after each deadline.

We've dedicated several of our monthly department chair meetings this fall to assessment, with experts from the HLC as well as fellow Jesuit institutions joining SLU chairs to share their experiences and insights. For more assistance with your assessment work, please contact Assistant Provost Steve Sanchez at x2611 or University Assessment Coordinator Kathleen Thatcher at x4189. I have asked Steve and Kathleen to report to me on the status of all programs' assessment efforts in accordance with these deadlines.

Faculty Hiring Process

In June 2016, SLU was formally notified of a technical violation of federal hiring regulations related to record-keeping from the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Federal Contract Compliance Program (OFCCP). As part of our Conciliation Agreement with the OFCCP, signed in September, we agreed to implement a revised hiring and record-keeping process to ensure we achieve and maintain OFCCP compliance. The new process – which we actually began implementing earlier, in Spring 2016 – includes a mandatory training workshop for search chairs and a requirement to diligently maintain all hiring-related records in our PeopleAdmin system. I realize this is a time-consuming effort, one that many are not used to. But we must remain compliant with the OFCCP in our hiring processes, and our new hiring process will ensure this is the case within Academic Affairs.

New \$1.2M Federal McNair Achievement Program Grant

SLU has been awarded a \$1.2M (\$240,000 per year for five years) U.S. Department of Education grant for the McNair Achievement Program. As one of eight federal TRIO programs designed to identify and provide services for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds, the McNair Achievement Program prepares undergraduate first-generation, low-income, and underrepresented students for doctoral studies.

SLU's McNair Program will support 25 students annually. Administered through the Office of Pre-College, Access, and TRIO programs, the program provides undergraduate McNair scholars opportunities to collaborate with faculty on research projects throughout the academic year and summer term. Students also participate in courses, seminars, and workshops related to graduate school preparation, and they present their research at national conferences. Many thanks to Will Perkins, director of Pre-College, Access, and TRIO programs, and all his colleagues for their work in winning this grant. It will truly change the lives of many deserving SLU students.

Support Strategic Research Initiatives

In the coming weeks, as part of the effort to double our research portfolio, Vice President for Research Ken Olliff and his colleagues will launch a strategic research initiatives process with a "Request for Big Ideas." Faculty will be asked to propose multi-disciplinary, ambitious programs in which SLU has existing strengths and the potential to achieve significant eminence and impact. The most forward-thinking ideas will be selected to receive planning grants of \$50-100K in the 2017-2018 academic year and will be invited to compete for launching grants in 2018-2019. A Research Growth Committee comprised of senior administrators and faculty leaders representing the diversity of our research portfolio – medicine, life sciences, physical sciences, social sciences, humanities — will select proposals for funding and serve as strategic advisors for projects.

Endowment Supporting the Humanities

Faculty support is one of the five key areas of emphasis for the capital campaign, led by Vice President Sheila Manion. Further, advancing teaching and scholarly excellence in the humanities was identified as a key priority. Accordingly, President Pestello recently established a dedicated endowment for the humanities overseen by the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. He has already committed \$2.3M toward a \$10M goal. There will not be any spend off the fund until we reach that goal, and all earnings on this endowment will be added to the principal until the \$10M mark is hit. At that time, Chris Duncan, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, and I will work on strategies for long-term use of the endowment's earnings to support the work of humanities faculty. This will continue to be a major element of the upcoming capital campaign and related development efforts; other sources of income will also be explored to ensure the endowment's growth.

Science and Engineering Planning

Another long-established institutional priority is advancing excellence in our natural sciences and engineering programs. One challenge to doing so is developing and revising academic programs and research efforts among disciplines that span colleges/schools, especially the College of Arts and Sciences and Parks College of Engineering, Technology, and Aviation. And I am well aware of those across campus who would like to see us reorganize our academic units in a way that houses all science and engineering disciplines under one organizational roof.

But before we reach any conclusion about our organizational structure, we need to study deeply whether such a move is necessary to achieve our goals. And to do that, we need greater

clarity about just what those goals are, and how well those goals are truly shared. From there we can determine what's needed to achieve our goals, and what obstacles – including our existing organizational structures – might hinder our progress.

Accordingly, I have established a Science and Engineering Task Force to lead this effort. Ken Olliff, Vice President for Research, and Michelle Sabick, Dean of Parks College, will co-chair the group. Broadly, their charge is to answer the following questions: What do we want to achieve over the next 5-10 years with regard to related teaching, research, and outreach. What do we need to reach these goals? What are obstacles that need to be removed in order for us to reach these goals?

I am currently working with the deans of all colleges/schools to solicit nominations of faculty to serve on the Task Force, and I'll update the community on this initiative when the group is formed.

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There is no shortage of work in all of our SLU lives. For your continued enthusiasm as we struggle with tight budgets, I am thankful. And I am enthused by the progress we're making – together, as a community. I look forward to reporting on more of that progress in the coming months.

Respectfully,

Nancy Brickhouse, Ph.D.
Provost