

## College Assessment Management System (AMS) Report

**Overview:** Beginning in Fall 2022, the Office of Assessment and Evaluation initiated a search for a new assessment management system (AMS) for the College. This process included the College community, especially faculty, at all steps. The search began with gaining a greater understanding of attitudes towards assessment technology, conducting focus groups, and assembling a platform review team to review possible AMS. After reviewing three products, the platform review team ultimately proposed using Insights by eLumen for academic course and program assessment and Watermark Planning & Self-Study for institutional and program accreditation support, self-studies, strategic planning, and assessment planning for non-academic units. Once these products were approved by the Board, an implementation team started the setup process for Insights by eLumen in Summer 2024. Implementation for Watermark Planning & Self-Study will begin in Spring 2025. The following report details the past two years of progress towards selecting and implementing a new assessment management system.

### Fall 2022

#### Assessment technology survey

In Fall 2022, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness surveyed faculty on their attitudes towards assessment at the College. The survey's main goals were to "learn more about how faculty at the College use and view assessment tools and technology".

### Spring 2023

#### PD Week

#### Survey results shared

During Spring 2023 Professional Development Week Dr. Eric Shannon, Director of Institutional Research, shared the results of the Fall 2022 Faculty Assessment Survey. Respondent demographics consisted of 59% full-time faculty, 24% part-time faculty, 7% program coordinators, 4% course coordinators, 3% department heads, and 3% other roles. The survey found that the most frequently reported methods to assess course learning outcomes (CLOs) were the total grade on exam or quiz (25.6%) and total score for an assignment submitted through Canvas, not an exam or quiz (23.62%). This question asked participants to select all methods used. Other methods included total scores on a rubric (14.76%), specific question or questions on an exam or quiz that does not use a bank of questions (13.37%), assignment that is not submitted through Canvas (8.64%), specific question or questions on an exam or quiz that uses a bank of

questions (8.36%), and specific line item on a rubric (6.41%). The most commonly used assessment technology was Canvas (62%) followed by AEFIS (Academic, Evaluation, Feedback and Intervention Systems) (17%), Word (6%), Excel (5%), Other (5), None (4%), and Dynamic Forms (1%). Next, participants ranked five general assessment characteristics from highest to lowest importance; autonomy (3.97), a predictable schedule (3.75), and flexibility (3.28) ranked the highest. Some major themes emerged from the open-ended questions, including recognition of the hard work of the Divisional Curriculum Assessment Facilitators (DCAF), excitement about the new direction assessment is headed, a desire for meaningful assessment, finding a software that meets the needs of the College rather than forcing the College to adapt to a software, and addressing the diverse needs of departments, subjects, etc.

## Lunch & open forum on assessment technology

The open forum was attended by twenty-six people, consisting of two Business & Technology faculty, twelve Liberal Studies faculty, nine Math, Science, and Health Careers faculty, and three administrators. First, the attendees were asked to share their best experiences with assessment technology. Responses included having someone other than themselves do the math, starting assessment at the beginning of the semester, and embedding learning outcomes in Canvas rubrics. Next, the attendees were asked to share their worst experiences with assessment technology. Responses included issues with AEFIS, issues with the SharePoint repository, a quiz feature in Canvas being deactivated and losing all assessments, and being unable to find any software resolution or solutions. Finally, the attendees were asked to choose their top five characteristics for assessment technology. The top choices were flexible customization options for pulling reports (11%), tech that does not increase workload (11%), flexibility in what is measured and how (8%), and tech that is specific to divisions, departments, or programs (8%).

## January-March:

### Academic and Student Success Council update: survey results, focus group plan, Platform Review Team (PRT) planning

On January 25, 2023, the Office of Assessment and Evaluation (OAE) presented the survey results, focus group plan, and planning for the Platform Review Team (PRT) to the Academic and Student Success Council (ASSC). This presentation highlighted the timeline for the College Assessment Task Force (CATF) and reviewed the survey results. OAE also shared their plans for focus groups in Spring 2023 with department heads and program coordinators within and across divisions, full and part-time faculty, and Administrative and Educational Support (AES) units.

## Platform Review Team created, charge shared, and meetings begun

The Platform Review Team was established to guide the selection of a new assessment management system (AMS). Membership on the team changed over time and included individuals from several areas of the College:

- Dawn Janich, Faculty, Biology, DCAF (Math, Science, and Health Careers)
- Angela Barnes, Faculty, Dental Hygiene, DCAF (Math, Science, and Health Careers)
- Richard Chu, Faculty, Biology, DCAF (Math, Science and Health Careers)
- Brenton Webber, Department Head, Mathematics
- Rebecca Peterson, Faculty, Diagnostic Medical Imaging
- Chris Popescu, Faculty, Economics, DCAF (Business and Technology)
- Taoufik Ennoure, Faculty, Computer Technologies
- Gayathri Banavara, Department Head, Business Leadership, Fashion & Hospitality
- Michael Hackett, Faculty, Computer Technologies
- Ilze Nix, Faculty, Psychology, DCAF (Liberal Studies)
- Davido Dupree, Department Head, Psychology, Education, and Human Services
- Faye Allard, Faculty, Social Science
- Paul Geissinger, Department Head, Music
- Mike Krasulski, Department Head, Library
- Ayanna Washington, Executive Director, Career Advanced Technology Center
- Karen Rege, Dean, Online Learning & Media Services
- Vaishali Sharma, Manager, Online Learning
- Vijay Sonty, Chief Information Officer
- Sesime Adanu, Associate Vice President, Institutional Effectiveness
- Lizzie Gordon, Manager, Assessment and Evaluation
- Amy Birge-Caracappa, Director, Assessment

The team's charge was to establish criteria for an AMS using feedback from surveys and focus groups, meet with vendors and review potential platforms, advise on communication strategy, provide written feedback, and participate in presentations as needed. The timeline was set from February 16 to July 13, 2023 with biweekly meetings as well as vendor demonstrations.

## April-May

### Assessment focus groups conducted

Over a two-week period, the OAE conducted ten focus groups of various College populations including full-time faculty in each division, part-time faculty, department heads and program coordinators, and administrative/non-teaching faculty and staff. The team established moderator guides that outlined group guidelines, how audio recordings would be used, and topics to guide the discussion. The major topic areas

were 1) experiences with assessment, 2) desires and plans for assessment, and 3) assessment technology and processes.

## Platform evaluation rubric drafted

An evaluation rubric was created to establish a rigorous method of evaluating AMS proposals. The criteria considered were ease of use for end users, integration with Canvas, data, flexibility, reporting, student-centeredness, and customer service. Each category was broken down into a few subcategories and ranked on a scale from 0 to 5 with the option to include notes.

## Summer 2023

### ASSC update: Focus group highlights, PRT update

On July 19, 2023, OAE presented to the ASSC the results of the focus groups and current work of the PRT. The focus groups revealed a desire for improving teaching and unit performance, a desire for support, frustration with frequent change in assessment technology, and a desire for clear, regular, consistent communication about assessment.

The PRT conducted team meetings, formed a working group for a Request for Proposal (RFP), and submitted the RFP to Purchasing. The bidding process was expected to begin in August and September 2023.

### RFP drafted

The RFP solicited proposals for a product that could meet the following purpose:

- The AMS will provide a system for the collection and analysis of a variety of assessment data as well as planning, and continuous improvement in the assessment of student learning outcomes and administrative programs.
- The AMS will provide reports on the achievement of learning outcomes and other assessment outcomes for an audience comprised of both faculty and administrators.
- The AMS will manage assessment data in the areas of course, program, general education, and administrative and student support assessment.
- The AMS will aid in the assessment of program viability and provide needed data analysis for accrediting purposes.
- It will seamlessly integrate with the College's learning management system, Canvas, and its enterprise resource planning system, Banner 9, and will allow the College to map outcomes to the College Strategic Plan.

The draft included a table of requested features and a rating system for if the feature was included in the standard package, available for an additional cost, available with customization, planned for future release, or not available. The RFP also detailed the desired content of the proposal such as qualification, experience, cost proposal, and key project personnel.

## Fall 2023

### PD Week

#### Results of Spring 2023 focus groups shared

In May 2023, a series of eleven focus groups was conducted by the OAE and volunteer faculty and staff moderators from the College Assessment Task Force (CATF) to invite feedback from the College community about assessment. Specifically, the researchers intended to learn about faculty and staff perceptions of and experiences with assessment in general, assessment technology, and assessment processes at the College.

The foundational research questions were:

1. How does the College ensure that assessment leads to improvements in teaching and learning or unit outcomes, i.e., how do we systematically ensure that loops are closed?
2. How can we ensure that assessment is relevant to students, faculty and staff?
3. What technology tool(s) will best serve the current and future assessment needs at the College?

The population was divided into the following groups for the purposes of data collection and analysis:

	# of participants*
Administrative/Non-Teaching Faculty and Staff	14
Business and Technology Division Full-Time Faculty	2
Department Heads and Program Coordinators	11
Liberal Studies Division Full-Time Faculty	16
Math, Science, and Health Careers Division Full-Time Faculty	4
Part-Time Faculty	10
*Some participants hold more than one role at the College; they are recorded here based on the focus group segment they attended, i.e., this count is non-duplicative.	

Several broad themes were identified during the focus groups. Overall, the analysis revealed:

- Diversity – There was a breadth of experiences, opinions, and desires regarding assessment.
- Value and Transparency – Participants highlighted that to justify the investment of time and effort by both faculty and staff, the specific purpose, overall plan, and value of each of these stages must be clearly articulated by both direct supervisors and higher-level College administrators.
- Mission-driven - While many different perspectives were offered as to the exact mechanisms or processes to do so, faculty at all levels and administrators prioritize students' satisfaction, progress and wellbeing.
- Roles Are Not Well Defined - Different roles, such as the DCAF, OAE, academic deans, and department chairs, were frequently conflated, and the origination points of specific processes and policies were unclear to many participants outside of these structures.

Under the category of experiences with assessment, the following themes arose:

- Position Matters - Understandings of assessment and personally articulated purposes for assessment varied widely, not between all segments, but between different positions at the College.
- Desire for Cross-Pollination - Several faculty participants voiced desires for more opportunities to discuss assessment results at length with colleagues and to learn more about activities outside of their immediate area. They highlighted the creative potential of teaching circles, and of discussion groups composed of faculty from diverse fields sharing action plans and pedagogical strategies.
- Desire for Depth - A number of participants voiced cynicism about the purpose of assessment, characterizing it as a tedious reporting process done for the purposes of satisfying either upper-level College administrators or its accreditors.

The next broad category was desires and plans for assessment, which showed:

- Seeing the Bigger Picture - When asked to describe what they would like to learn from assessment processes, many participants voiced an interest in understanding how their work, assessment data, and reporting fit into a “bigger picture” of the College as a whole.
- Improving Teaching and Unit Performance - Assessment is seen as a method for determining the strengths and weaknesses of both individuals and groups, and the effectiveness of coordination between them. Teaching faculty were consistent in listing personal growth and teaching improvement as a primary purpose for assessment. Department Heads, Program Coordinators, administrative unit leaders, and participants who had served in these capacities previously all discussed using assessment as a tool to determine the effectiveness of program/curriculum/unit performance overall and to improve cohesion.
- Support is Needed and Appreciated - Nearly every participant expressed that greater support is needed for assessment activities. The specific types of support defined ranged from direct monetary or release/extended time compensation for completing assessment activities, to facilitated meetings with colleagues about assessment data and practices, to upgrading College equipment such as Scantron machines used in assessment data collection.

Finally, there was discussion on assessment technology and processes broken down as follows:

- Frustration with Frequent Change, Perceived Inconsistency - Many participants expressed cynicism about the actual value of assessment to their supervisors and to the College overall, citing as evidence the frequency of changes to assessment systems and processes. The selection and implementation of the current assessment management system, AEFIS, was cited as another area of inconsistency – the selection criteria and process were perceived as opaque, and the need for change from previous assessment reporting methods was not adequately articulated.
- Desire for Clear, Regular, Consistent, and Positive Communication about Assessment - All participants were asked directly about their preferences for communication about assessment expectations, a question which elicited perhaps the widest range of responses of the entire series. Some preferred email, a Canvas shell or hub, calendars, reminders, or other methods. One very consistent call across all groups was for communication that is clear, consistent and timely. Participants found it frustrating and disruptive to receive communications about assessment during the busiest times of the academic year, often asking for data or analysis on a very short timeline.
- The Best Assessment Technology is One That Works - Frustration for and cynicism around the AEFIS assessment management software was widespread but not universal. Some faculty members expressed satisfaction with their overall experiences with AEFIS, but many participants described a wide range of negative experiences with the AEFIS software, from a confusing user interface and lack of technical support, to inaccurate and at times misleading data analysis, to the time spent repeating the process of linking every semester.

The final recommendations from the focus groups are a shared definition of assessment, a culture shift that values assessment, creating and publishing a College Assessment Handbook, establishing a real-time resource hub with timelines and links, deploying a multi-point communication strategy, and selecting a fit-to-purpose AMS.

## Status of AMS search

During the Fall 2023 PD Week, OAE shared the status of the AMS search. Over the past year, the PRT began their regular meetings, reviewed the Fall 2022 faculty assessment survey results, and created the RFP. Attendees were given access to the RFP rubric with desired features. OAE then shared the next steps, including completing the legal aspects of the process, updating the RFP schedule, issuing the RFP, contacting finalists, holding finalist presentations, and starting the project.

## RFP issued

The RFP was issued on October 31, 2023, to five vendors: eLumen, Watermark, WEAVE, Xitrac, and Nuventive.

## Vendor proposals received and reviewed by PRT

The PRT received responses to the RFP from eLumen and Watermark. Both vendors responded with full proposals addressing the team's needs. eLumen submitted a proposal for their product, Insights, a tool fully integrated with the Canvas platform for managing learning outcomes, rubrics, curriculum mapping and assessment planning. Watermark submitted a proposal for two of their products, Planning & Self-Study (P&SS), an assessment and accreditation software for centralizing outcomes and assessment planning, and Student Learning & Licensure (SL&L), an assessment and student management software for evaluating coursework and student progress. In their review, the PRT rated the platforms on several criteria from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent). The ratings were as follows:

	Insights by eLumen	Watermark P&SS and SL&L
Usability	3.57	4.10
Reporting	4.02	4.27
General Features	3.77	4.21
Training and Support	3.97	4.30
Security/Performance	4.12	4.25
Overall	<b>3.85</b>	<b>4.21</b>

Watermark scored higher in all categories than eLumen. The team liked that Watermark has longitudinal tracking features and can support multiple levels of assessment planning. The team disliked that eLumen was a newer company, required more customization, and lacked features for strategic planning. Some appreciated how easily eLumen Insights integrated with Canvas and its strong reporting capabilities.

## Finalists contacted

The finalists, eLumen and Watermark, were contacted to host a live demo for the College.

## Spring 2024

### PD Week invitation to College Community to register for AMS platform demos

During Spring 2024 PD week, the College community was invited to the vendor demos.



## January: AMS platform demos from eLumen and Watermark, open to College and feedback solicited

The vendor demos were both held on Friday, January 12 over a two-hour time block each. These presentations were conducted virtually and open to the entire College. Summary scoring of the platforms was as follows:

	Insights by eLumen	Watermark P&SS and SL&L
<b>Usability</b>	4.37	3.55
<b>Reporting</b>	4.11	3.95
<b>General Features</b>	4.32	3.76
<b>Training and Support</b>	4.11	3.81
<b>Security/Performance</b>	4.16	3.55
<b>Overall</b>	<b>4.21</b>	<b>3.65</b>

Insights by eLumen scored higher in all categories than Watermark P&SS and SL&L. Generally, attendees appreciated that Insights by eLumen was integrated with Canvas and therefore did not require accessing a different portal. Negative comments on Insights by eLumen pointed out the lack of administrative assessment functions or strategic planning support in their platform and concerns for linking to external assignments. For Watermark, attendees liked the reporting options but criticized the usability of its platform.

The results from scoring the two AMS proposals showed that the PRT favored Watermark over eLumen while faculty favored the opposite. As faculty would be the main users for academic assessment, their preference of eLumen was chosen; however, to meet full institutional need, PRT also selected the Watermark assessment and accreditation tool, Planning & Self-Study.

## March: AMS implementation planning presentation to ASSC

On March 27, 2024, OAE presented the status of implementation to the ASSC. The PRT selected eLumen and Watermark to be used in different capacities. Insights by eLumen is intended for academic course and program learning outcome assessment and would be implemented first. The proposed implementation timeline for Insights included cohort training and pilot training in Summer 2024, pilot, adoption and faculty training in Fall 2024, implementation at scale in Spring 2025, and troubleshooting in Summer 2025. OAE requested faculty liaisons from each division for the eLumen implementation process. Watermark P&SS is intended as an evidence repository for institutional and program accreditation support, self-studies, strategic planning, and assessment planning for non-academic units. The proposed implementation timeline included planning and setup in January 2025, design and build in February/March 2025, validation in April 2025, pilot planning in May 2025, and pilot and troubleshooting in

Summer 2025. For Watermark P&SS, OAE requested one assessment representative from each division, three to five department heads from each division, and department heads from advising, counseling, and the Library & Learning Lab for the Planning implementation process. The planned next steps were to obtain contracts and signatures for both AMS, assemble implementation teams, hold a pre-meeting with eLumen, and plan Watermark implementation.

## April: Business Affairs and Board of Trustees approved

The PRT proposed renewing HelioCampus for one year through August 2025 to provide coverage during pilots, adopt Insights beginning in early summer 2024, and adopt Watermark P&SS in Spring 2025. At the April 4, 2024 Board of Trustees meeting, the Board approved the proposal.

## Summer 2024

### Final contracts signed

On June 26, 2024, the final contracts were signed for both Insights by eLumen and Watermark Planning & Self-Study.

### Cohort Training

An implementation team was assembled for setting up the eLumen software consisting of the OAE, the DCAF, the Dean of Online Media Services and Learning, and the Manager of Online Learning. Training for Insights by eLumen followed a cohort model consisting of five concurrent sessions on alternating weeks. Between sessions, the implementation team reviewed documentation or met with the Customer Success Manager, Erin Kennedy, to ask questions or work through setup. The sessions focused on the main features of Insights, live demonstrations, and how to find further information such as in the Knowledge Base. Sessions were attended by the Implementation Team, the Associate Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness, the Chief Information Officer, and General Education Coordinator when applicable.

### Setup

Insights software is seamlessly integrated with the College's LMS, Canvas, allowing faculty access to curriculum mapping, assessment planning, and data analytics directly in the Canvas platform. All setup was supported by the Manager of Online Learning and by IT. In the initial phase of implementation, all setup has occurred on our beta website so that the production instance of Canvas is not affected until we are ready to deploy.

Over Summer 2024, the implementation team focused on customization and set up of several key elements in Insights. These elements are further detailed below.

## Course level outcomes

Insights enables several unique features with course level outcomes. The dashboard will show a visual representation of mastery for each outcome so that faculty and program coordinators always have access to their data. Also, faculty can record reflections on courses that can be used for the broader assessment practice in their program.

## Program level outcomes

Program level outcomes (PLO) are each entered as their own category so that courses can easily map to individual PLOs. At the program level, program coordinators will be able to see learning outcome results easily in an interactive display.

## Institutional Level Outcomes

One of Insights' strengths is the ability to aggregate data from the course level all the way up to the institutional level. The College has six Essential Skills, or what Insights calls Institutional Level Outcomes (ILOs). To allow for easier alignment with course rubrics, each ILO has its own category with each general education measure (GEM) as its own subcategory. For example, Cultural Analysis and Interpretation is divided into CAI 1 and 2 so that courses which only align with one GEM can appropriately link to only that GEM.

## Curriculum mapping

Curriculum maps show where student learning outcomes are taught within a curriculum and when assessed. At the college, all programs have a curriculum map using the common IRMA format – this describes if an outcome is Introduced, Reinforced, Mastered, and/or Assessed. Due to current restrictions in Insights, an outcome can only have one level at a time, but they are also optional. In Insights, courses can be mapped to ILOs, PLOs, or CLOs. Insights also allow for future curriculum maps so coordinators can make changes in anticipation of future changes while leaving the current map unchanged.

## Assessment planning and cycles

Insights allows users to create assessment plans in advance using cycles and goals. Parent cycles are over-arching levels for organizing multiple activities. Individual cycles can then be configured with goals, objectives, cycle type, and dates.

## User permissions

User permissions can easily be customized in Insights. Program coordinators will have access to data for their program including their students' performance in classes outside

of their program. For example, the Biology A.S. program coordinator can view their students' performance in Math and Chemistry classes too. DCAF will be able to view data for their respective divisions. Most faculty will see only their own courses.

## Additional Setup

The organizational structure is custom-built to mirror the College's structure and broken down into course groups consisting of core classes, electives, and general education courses. Insights allows for customization of course code patterns, the alphanumeric codes specifying individual courses, aligning with the organizational structure. Finally, mastery levels establish a shared system for aggregation of student performance.

## DCAF Retreat

On June 5, 2024, OAE hosted a retreat for DCAF. The facilitators in attendance included two faculty from Math, Science and Health Careers – Angela Barnes (Dental Hygiene) and Richard Chu (Biology); two faculty from Business and Technology – Rebecca Garvin (Economics) and Chris Popescu (Economics and Finance); and three faculty from Liberal Studies – Ilze Nix (Psychology), Joel Tannenbaum (History), and Paula White (English). The retreat included a discussion of best practices and problem-solving in assessment, an overview of our assessment repositories, an overview of Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) Guiding Principles, and attending the first Insights Cohort Training session. As the facilitators span the three academic divisions, the discussion proved quite fruitful in sharing their individual processes, specific roadblocks, and learnings from the past year. Conversation especially focused on what meaningful assessment looks like at the College.

### **Submitted by the Office of Assessment and Evaluation, Summer 2024**

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