



UNIVERSITY OF
SAN FRANCISCO

Office of Assessment
and Accreditation Support



Biannual Newsletter from the University Assessment Committee

Greetings USF Colleagues,

In each issue of *In the Loop*, we celebrate assessment and accreditation endeavors at the university and we highlight opportunities for development and support in all things assessment-related.

In this issue's Notes from the Field section, Amy Flynn, associate dean for academic affairs, recounts the meaningful and challenging process leading to the School of Law's reaccreditation by the American Bar Association (ABA). In the Magis Methods section, we list new resources and guidelines for Academic Program

Review, and we feature an interdisciplinary group of USF faculty members who will participate in the AAC&U Institute on AI, Pedagogy, and the Curriculum.

We hope this issue inspires your engagement and curiosity in assessment projects within your departments and units!

Yours in the loop,
The University Assessment Committee

Announcements

Assessment-Related Events & Upcoming Conferences

Upcoming Conferences

- **April 2–4** | Garden Grove, CA | **WSCUC Accreditation Resource Conference**
- **April 3–5** | San Juan, Puerto Rico | **AAC&U Conference on Learning and Student Success (CLASS)**
- **April 5–8** | Chicago, IL | **Higher Learning Commission Annual Conference**
- **May 27–30** | Alexandria, VA | **AALHE Annual Assessment Conference**

Series on Addressing Bias and Racism in Assessment

The **University Assessment Committee's** Series on Addressing Bias and Racism in Assessment will return for a third year in November. This year, Professors Nicole Gonzales Howell and Freddie Seba will present on "Ethical and Informed Assessment in the AI Age: Tackling Bias." Professor Seba will present at noon on Monday, Nov. 4, and Tuesday, Nov. 5. Professor Gonzales Howell will present at noon on Wednesday, Nov. 13, and Thursday, Nov. 14. More information will be provided in an email announcement. The series is generously funded by the Jesuit Foundation. Please email **Marisa McCarthy** with any questions or to sign up early.

Assessment Workshop Interest Form

Do you need support with developing and refining program learning outcomes (PLOs), or are you looking for guidance as you analyze and interpret data to support your assessment plans? Could you use some tips on forming an assessment plan? The **Office of Assessment & Accreditation Support** is seeking your input on the topics and types of assessment programming that are most relevant to you!

[Complete the Form »](#)

Magis Methods

Assessment-Related Tips & Resources

Updated Academic Program Review Guidelines

As faculty and staff prepare for the next cycle of Academic Program Review (APR), we wanted to provide a reminder that the APR guidelines were updated in spring 2024 to include an overview of the APR process and supporting resources:



- How the APR process, annual assessment, and strategic planning intersect
- Roles and responsibilities
- Developing an assessment plan
- Preparation checklist
- Suggested timelines
- Preparing for program review
- Completing the self-study and external review
- The self-study report template
- An external review template
- Action planning
- Action plan and progress report template

You can find the updated guidelines and additional resources intended to assist with the APR process on the **Office of Assessment & Accreditation Support** website.

Institute on AI, Pedagogy, and the Curriculum



We are excited to announce that five USF faculty members across the university have been accepted to participate in the inaugural **Institute on AI, Pedagogy, and the Curriculum** through the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U).

AAC&U is a global membership organization dedicated to advancing the democratic purposes of higher education by promoting equity, innovation, and excellence in liberal education. The USF faculty team comprises **Nicole Gonzales Howell** (College of Arts and Sciences; Rhetoric and Language), **Freddie Seba** (School of Nursing and Health Professions; Digital Health Informatics), **Mana Azarm** (School of Management; Analytics and Information Systems), **Ed Munnich** (College of Arts and Sciences; Psychology), and **Virginia Ramos** (College of Arts and Sciences; Languages, Literatures, and Cultures).

This initiative addresses the challenges and opportunities that artificial intelligence (AI) presents for higher education. Throughout the 2024–25 academic year, the AI Institute will provide participating teams with virtual events, mentorship, and opportunities to interact as they develop and implement AI-focused action plans for their classrooms, curricula, and for the USF campus. The USF team will focus on several key priorities, including exploring higher education assessment and equity in the era of AI. As part of this vital work, the USF team will engage the broader university community to understand better how AI can support your learning, teaching, and professional efforts. We will solicit input, build on existing work on campus, and cultivate collaboration among learners, faculty, and staff to ensure this initiative aligns with the needs of our university community and advances USF’s commitment to academic excellence, social responsibility, and ethical technology integration. Our guiding principle, from the Strategic Plan, is that education continues to be a humanizing activity in the Age of AI.

Please look for upcoming opportunities to participate in this exciting endeavor. We look forward to working together as we navigate AI’s evolving role in higher education. Please reach out to **Nicole Gonzales Howell** or **Freddie Seba** if you have any questions.

Notes from the Field

Assessment Stories from USF Departments & Units

Focusing on Meaningful Improvements for Our Students

By Amy Flynn, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, Professor of Legal Writing and Lawyering Skills and Director, Keta Taylor Colby Death Penalty Project

The School of Law is in the process of finishing its 10-year accreditation cycle, having recently received the final reports from both the American Bar Association (ABA) Council and the Association of American Law Schools (AALS). Leading a school through the accreditation process is no easy task, especially when the everyday mission of teaching students and running the school compete with the time-consuming tasks involved in preparing for a site visit. Faculty are focused on their teaching, mentoring, and scholarship responsibilities, and students depend on our staff’s support as they progress through a rigorous curriculum. Getting people to step away from that work to focus on data collection, assessment reports, and administrative tasks can be a challenge even when many of the tasks can actually improve the outcomes of our work. It’s a delicate balancing act — acknowledging the pressures of accreditation while also respecting that everyone’s priority is, and should be, the students.

In order to manage this tension, we tried to get past checking off boxes wherever possible and dig in to assess our mission and consider whether we’re truly delivering on our promise to prepare students for successful legal practice. Focusing on improving the student experience and outcomes in tangible ways, it became easier to unify everyone around the effort. Even if faculty and staff are bought into the core mission behind the assessment cycle, leading through this process requires careful and early coordination, clear communication, and a lot of patience.

The ABA’s accreditation process is thorough, starting with a comprehensive self-study. During the two years

leading up to the site visit, our team gathered data, combed through financial reports, dissected student learning assessments, and responded to hundreds of questions across several hundred pages. We produced thousands of pages of documents and worked together to create an honest self-assessment that focused the true strengths and weaknesses of the institution.

By the time the ABA site team arrived, the hardest work was already behind us, but the site visit was still quite stressful. Our entire institution gets scrutinized in real-time. What surprised us, though, was how collaborative the process turned out to be this year. While the team was absolutely focused on compliance, they came as experienced legal educators who understand our challenges. Most of them agreed that the process was not just about checking boxes, and they engaged in meaningful dialogue, offering practical suggestions on curriculum, teaching methods, and student support. While the visit was intense, and there was a well-earned celebration after the team left, the collaborative nature of the process helped shift the focus from stress to meaningful improvement for our students.

The process was demanding, but I believe we used it as an opportunity to take an honest, hard look at ourselves and make meaningful improvements. As we all know, accreditation isn't just a once-in-a-decade task — it's part of a continuous cycle of growth, punctuated by those intense years leading up to a site visit. Even now, as I gather data for this year's ABA questionnaire (which feels much more manageable), I'm grateful to have more space to focus on the daily work of running and improving the school. This is the work that matters — the work that, hopefully, we'll be able to showcase in our next site visit report nine years from now.



Photos from left to right: 1) It's all about the students! Amy Flynn hosts students at the School of Law BBQ fundraiser for the Public

Submit to *In the Loop!*

We want to feature your assessment experiences in the next edition of *In the Loop!* Please email your ideas to **Katie Hoffman**.

If you are looking for support with academic and co-curricular program reviews, the Office of Assessment and Accreditation Support (OAAS) can help. Please email **Deborah Panter**, call **(415) 422-4588**, or visit the **OAAS website** for more information.

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