

## **Assessment Grant Initiative Implementation Report**

Awardees of all grants are asked to share their assessment projects/pilots and results with the greater UMaine community. Therefore, we are asking awardees to submit a brief summary of their findings to OIRA the year following their award. Please complete the form below and give a summary of your findings. This summary should be less than 500 words.

If you were funded for an assessment project, please report on the results of the project, any challenges encountered during implementation, and future plans.

If you were funded for a Brightspace course pilot, please reflect upon the experience, including the benefits and challenges of implementation, and future plans for rolling out your use of the learning outcomes tools. These summaries will be posted on the OIRA website.

Title of Proposal: **Revising a Novel Tool for Program Assessment**

Department or Program: **Ecology and Environmental Sciences**

Faculty Member(s) or Staff Member(s): **Kate Ruskin**

Academic Rank or Title: **Senior Lecturer and Undergraduate Coordinator**

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Project Summary (500 words or less):

We convened the four faculty members within EES that teach courses in which we currently collect program level assessment data the week before the start of the fall 2023 semester in August. Over lunch, we conducted a focus group using guided questions to solicit feedback from faculty on the EES assessment tool (funded by a 2021-2022 minigrant) and process. Themes included: 1) that the tool was easy and worked well, 2) few suggestions for improvement, 3) process not a large time burden but greatest challenges lie in one more (small) thing to do and systematic challenges. Systematic challenges mentioned include increasing class sizes, rotating adjuncts decreasing continuity, teaching loads, and the difficulty of collecting assessment months afterward when it commonly gets delayed because of increasing workloads.

The faculty found the focus group most helpful because it convened them to talk about their shared course, students, and program—something they don't often have the opportunity to do, particularly in a diffuse and adjunct-heavy program like EES. They not only talked about general topics such as student competencies and past challenges in the classroom, but also planned for the upcoming semester, an unintended benefit of delaying the focus group from the original plan of May 2023. The biggest take home from the focus group is that faculty are interested in assessment and reflection on their courses, and they would like to make more opportunities to do so though it's challenging to convene in the current environment. We hope to align a unit meeting with the end of the semester when assessment data can be collected so one unit meeting can be devoted to similar discussion in the future.

Remaining work to do: small changes to the current assessment tool by graduate assistant and share out the results of the focus group with unit leadership.

Signature of Applicant:



Date: Sept. 22, 2023