Recommendation to Change Assessment Process

There are two purposes for assessment: demonstrating proficiency and improving student learning. Of these two, by far the most important is improving student learning (this is recognized by accrediting agencies and assessment literature). The good thing is that the same data used to improve student learning will also demonstrate proficiency (but the opposite is not always the case). In order for UCA to improve student learning (or, in other words, create a culture of assessment), the most important factor is faculty buy-in. There is nothing more critical; faculty have to drive the improvement process. No other individual or organization can do this.

1. **Faculty will not buy-in**: if we expect faculty to hand over their assignment artifact (paper, oral presentation video, etc), to be assessed by "graders", faculty will not be invested in the process. Most will do so willingly (less work on their part). But it will never provide faculty motivation to improve learning; it will always be a "have to". Faculty might like this till the results show weaknesses, at which point they may get defensive and/or suggest the graders are not accurate enough. Faculty must have ownership of the assignment and its assessment, which can then be used to acquire motivation to improve learning. It is important to note that the rubric scores given by an instructor in no way can be used for or against the instructor; it is merely his/her assessment of each student (unless, of course, the scores are contrived—like giving all individuals the same score for every item).

2. **Level of Improvement**: how do we improve student learning? We do *this at the discipline level, within each major*. Rubrics will always reveal weak areas; for each cycle, pick one or two and figure out ways to improve. Use the resources of CTE, Assessment Office, and other faculty to figure out how. This process means that if one faculty member routinely assesses his students at a higher level than another faculty member (and the students are in actuality are at the same level), it doesn't really matter at all. Improve weak areas.

3. **Difference in Disciplines**: each learning objective in the Core means different things to different disciplines. This is as it should be. CI (Goal B Scientific Method) means something different to Chemistry or Physics than it does to Music and Marketing. The level of understanding, analysis and synthesis will clearly be more for a science major. The understanding and synthesis of ethical concepts will be higher for a philosophy major than in other disciplines. Of course, we want these differences. So, if these are not rubric assessed by the instructor, how would this work? Two options:

- UCA Experts: we might have Philosophy assess all ethics rubrics campus-wide. We might have Biology/Chemistry assess all Scientific Method. If this is the case, then our experts will do so on a superficial level, without a context in each major. Faculty will REALLY not buy into this model.
- College/Discipline Graders: assuming we could get these across each discipline, these graders could take into account the context; they would (hopefully) understand how students should grow in each objective over time, which differs by discipline. But we still end up with discipline-specific grades. **A "4" on the ethics rubric for philosophy majors means something different than a "4" for an MIS major; we still do not have generalizable results**.

In addition, UD Core courses are not about knowledge acquisition. It is about analysis and synthesis. We do not assess the bare bones of an oral presentation (e.g., visual aids, eye contact) as much as assess the capability of the student to synthesize and present content within the presentation. Unless graders are course instructors, or at a minimum from the same department (and even this is somewhat questionable unless the department has met and agreed on how majors should grow in each learning objective over time), they will not have the context with which to assess students at this level.

4. **This effort will cost scarce resources.**