Dr. Doğan Çömez, Chair
Department of Mathematics
Minard Hall, Room 300C
NDSU Campus

Dear Dr. Çömez:

This letter contains a completed review for the assessment report submitted for the faculty of the Department of Mathematics for the 2009 – 2010 academic year and submitted, as scheduled, during the current calendar year.

This review represents a singular point of view as members of the University Assessment Committee were not available to a second perspective. Previous assessment reports from the department and responses to those reports were not consulted as the current report addressed previous comments.

The departmental self-evaluation of “Levels of Implementation” was appreciated for several high self-appraisals that were substantiated in the report and for candor in one section. That item established the foundation for the current report.

The department’s responsiveness to previous comments is appreciated, as have been individual conversations about assessment of student learning and implementation of the department’s goals for student achievement. Sharing the report with Dean McCaul and with departments/programs served is an excellent innovation and one that could be suggested to additional academic units. Dr. Khan’s comments were substantial and inclusion of the full text of his response is appreciated.

The immediate impression of the report is that NDSU and our students are fortunate to have a number of faculty in the Department of Mathematics who care deeply about what their students learn, reflect on the information obtained in their classes, and employ a variety of techniques as they strive to optimize student learning. Please extend sincere appreciation to those members of the faculty and teaching staff!

The most effective artifacts from individual instructors could be equated with the best examples from essentially any institution. Congratulations! These examples demonstrated a sincere interest in the quantity and quality of student learning, an awareness of relevant pedagogy, and an active interest in adapting their current approaches to improve student learning in the future. These are the colleagues whom we celebrate and hold up as examples to others inside and outside the university!

One individual commented, repeatedly, about a bimodal distribution of grades. This scenario is common in introductory classes. There were tendencies among some of the individual comments that ranged from dismissal of the potential for improvement to neglecting to provide reflective comments and analyses.
Occasional boilerplating by some associated with multiple sections or multiple courses was present. In fairness, some of the comments that were repeated contained effective statements and appropriate conclusions. It is just that the act of replicating comments could lead to questions of motivation or intent.

The reflective summary from the department was a strength of the report. It was direct and, in the perspective of this reviewer, an effective capsule. The report serves as an example of planning through the use of a logical approach to identifying how instructors are addressing student learning in their classrooms. The information in this report speaks with a powerful voice (and insightful analysis) to the distribution of teaching effectiveness. It can be hoped that information from assessment reports might serve as part of the matrix in evaluating merit raises for teaching. A basis for that approach is apparent in the reflective statements and analyses contained in this report.

The assessment plan is built upon a five-year cycle. This does not seem to be a long cycle given the number of courses and sections offered by the department.

Concerns are confined to two areas. The issue with involvement of some members of the faculty is an issue on almost ANY campus. The more significant issue might be with impact upon the members of the department's assessment committee. The extent of content and the strength of that content are sincerely appreciated by this reviewer. The effort in assembling an extensive report must be acknowledged. Unfortunately, there are no immediate suggestions on how to reduce the work load on key individuals.

The current report is, by any standard, significant. It is based upon a strong assessment plan and presents information in a straightforward manner. Supportive comments (Good job!, Bravo!!!, Awesome!, etc.) were placed in the margins of several pages and many lines of text were underlined for emphasis in rereading the material. A lasting impression was that "This is good stuff!".

The evaluation for the current report is a slightly conservative 9.2, up from the previous 8.0 and 6.0 for the report for the 200-2008 academic year. Sincere appreciation is expressed to the members of the department's assessment committee for developing a solid assessment plan and for guiding implementation of the plan in such an effective manner!

Please feel free to contact Dr. Marinus Otte, representative from the College of Science and Mathematics to the University Assessment Committee or me if you, members of the department's assessment committee, or the faculty have comments or questions about assessment of student learning or this review.

Best wishes for another successful academic year!
Sincerely,

Robert Harrold
For the members of the University Assessment Committee

Enclosures: Overview, Graph

Copy: Dr. J. Bruce Ralpert, Provost
Dr. Kevin McCaul, Dean, College of Science and Mathematics
Dr. James Council, Associate Dean
Dr. Wendy Reed, Associate Dean
Assessment Committee, Department of Mathematics
   Dr. Angela Hodge
   Dr. Sean Sather-Wagstaff
Dr. Marinus Otte, representative from the College of Science and Mathematics to the
University Assessment Committee
Dr. Larry Peterson, Chair, General Education Committee
Overview:
Assessment Report
from the Department of Mathematics
for the 2009 - 2010 Academic Year

Date that this review was completed: August 31, 2011

Strengths of the report included, but were not limited to:

- The current report contains strong information on student learning from multiple instructors who effectively addressed the fundamental questions of assessment. (What did you do, What did you learn, and What do you plan to do differently?)

- The current assessment plan is effective and all courses offered will be addressed during the five-year cycle. The duration of the assessment plan is consistent with the number of courses and individual sections offered.

- The current approach to reporting assessment of student learning provides multiple examples that could be used in faculty training and, to some extent, evaluation of those contributing to the report.

- The departmental summary was direct, effective, and, in the perspective of this reviewer, accurate. This was consistent with the self-evaluation in the “Levels of Implementation” instrument that was an accurate reflection of the content of the report.

- The department is fortunate to have knowledgeable faculty leading assessment activities.

Opportunities for future consideration could include:

▲ Encouraging additional faculty to “get on board” may be the greatest challenge.

Please recognize that this is a nearly universal challenge!

Supportive comment:

▲ Recent assessment reports have been notable for inclusion of extensive information (data). Concerns must be expressed that the members of the department’s assessment committee receive positive recognition for their efforts and skills.
Figure 1. Plot of assessment report evaluations for the Department of Mathematics *versus* the campus average and the average of the top 25% of reports for the academic years from 1998 – 1999 through 2009 - 2010.

**Evaluation Score:**

![Graph showing evaluation scores over academic years from 1999-00 to 2009-10](image)

**Academic Year:**

**Comments:** Evaluation scores for the 2008 - 2009 academic year (Campus average and top 25%) remain in development. To provide a frame of reference, previous values have been carried forward. Those values may be expected to show a slight change when the final data become available.

The missing observation in the graph reflects submission of a new assessment plan rather than an inference that a report was not submitted.