This document reports a set of indicators representing UNL's progress on outcomes assessment. Indicators were identified based on the North Central Association's "Levels of Implementation" framework.

Data for determining progress on the indicators is based on information reported in the colleges' annual assessment reports. Although information from annual reports is rich, it is not comprehensive. These reports do not always capture the varied and complex ways in which evidence of student learning is a part of the understanding, discussions, and decisions about educational programs. Although our understanding of the role that outcomes assessment does and will play at our institution has significantly evolved establishing, a cohesive relationship between outcomes assessment and improving educational programs is an on-going effort. The following charts present the extent to which we have achieved this goal.

Progress for outcomes assessment activities in undergraduate and graduate programs are presented seperately because of how UNL gradually rolled out its outcomes assessment plans. Initial efforts in 1997 focused on the undergraduate major. Assessment of graduate programs, although already occurring in some programs, was formally initiated in 2000. Therefore, these two efforts occurring at different paces as represented in the document.

Data from 1997 (1996-97 Academic Year) and 2000 (1999-2000 Academic Year) are used to document progress on each indicator. Data from 1998 (1997-98 Academic Year) and 1999 (1998-99 Academic Year) were also collected but for the most part gradual progress on all indicators occurred over all four years. Therefore, only data from 1997 & 2000 are included in the charts.

The level at which UNL's colleges conduct and report outcomes assessment activities, is the unit of analysis for the undergraduate charts. The total number of units for 1999-2000 is 68 units. This total is slightly below the total number of undergraduate majors. This is because in one college outcomes assessment activities are conducted at the college level rather than the department or program level resulting in a unit analysis of one for that college. Logically, in this particular instance all of the college's majors share a core curriculum that represents a considerable portion of the curricular requirements for those majors.

The charts are shared in the following logical order:

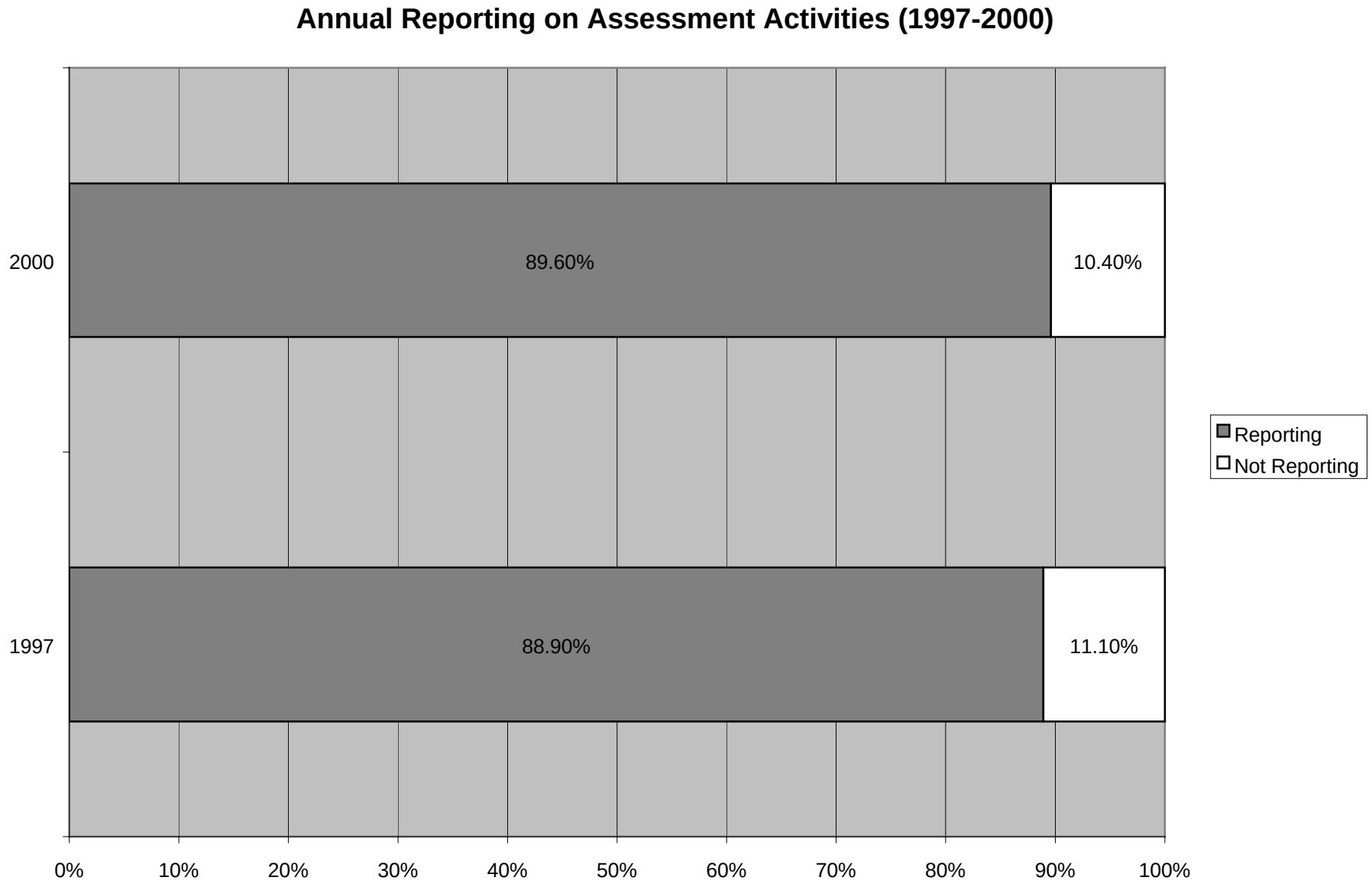
I. Percentage of All Units Reporting on their Outcomes Assessment Activities
II. Percentage of All Units Having and Implementing an Outcomes Assessment Plan
III. Percentage of All Units using Outcomes Assessment Results
IV. Description of How Results from Outcomes Assessment Methods are Used

V. Contribution of Different Types of Evidence to Results
VI. Types of Issues Raised about Educational Program from Outcomes Assessment Results
VII. Types of Actions taken in response to Issues raised in Outcomes Assessment Results

I. Percentage of Units Reporting on their Outcomes Assessment Activities

Purpose of the Graph: Represents the percentage of 68 units who submitted a report on their outcomes assessment activities. This chart does not represent the quality of those assessment activities. However, subsequent charts will represent the quality of assessment activities.

Comment on Results: The percentage of units reporting their outcomes assessment activities has remained stable between 1997 through 2000, hovering around 90%. This indicates that in any one year only 6-7 units did not submit an annual report of their outcomes assessment activities. It is significant that this percentage did not slip between 1997 and 2000. Because an 1996-97 North Central Association accreditation visit emphasized the importance of outcomes assessment, colleges and departments initiated active engagement in assessment activities in 1997. This engagement might have decreased over time but did not as this graph illustrates.

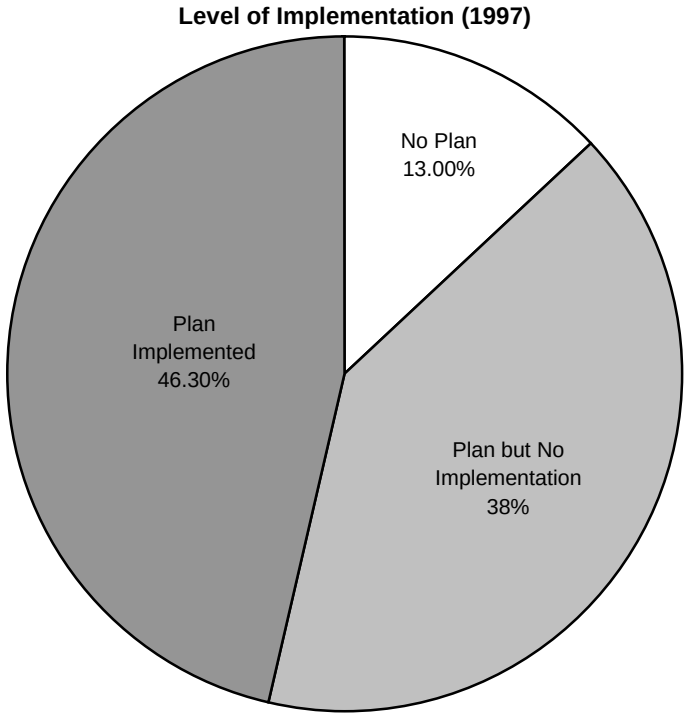

Annual Reporting on Assessment Activities (1997-2000)
2000
89.60%
10.40%
1997
88.90%
11.10%
0%
10%
20%
30%
40%
50%
60%
70%
80%
90%
100%
Reporting
Not Reporting

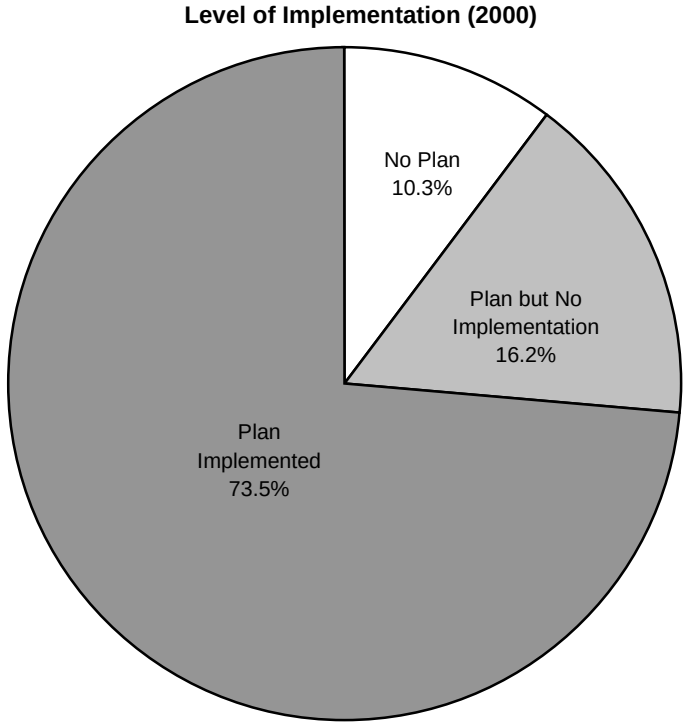
II. Percentage of All Units Having and Implementing an Outcomes Assessment Plan

Purpose of the Graph: Represents the percentage of 68 units:

- who do not have a plan/do not report a plan,
- who have a plan but have not implemented the assessment activities of that plan, or
- who have implemented to some extent the assessment activities of their plan.

Comment on Results: The percentages for the three categories in the pie chart indicate that between 1997-2000 the number of identified units that have implemented their assessment activities increased by approximately 28%. Meanwhile, the percentage of units that do not have a plan/do not report a plan has remained the same. Most units in the later category are the approximately 6-7 units who did not submit an annual assessment report (see previous chart). This suggests continued progress in the extent to which units at UNL are implementing their assessment activities over the last four years.

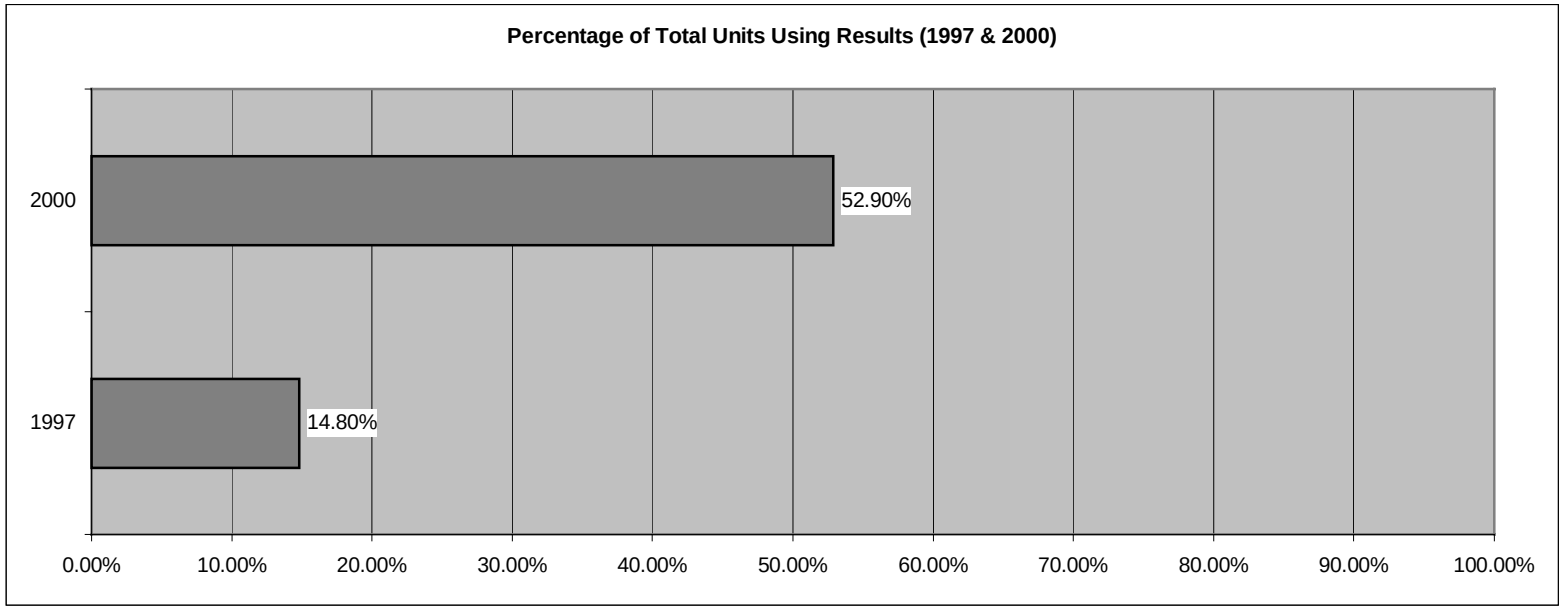

Level of Implementation (1997)
No Plan
13.00%
Plan but No
Implementation
38%
Plan
Implemented
46.30%

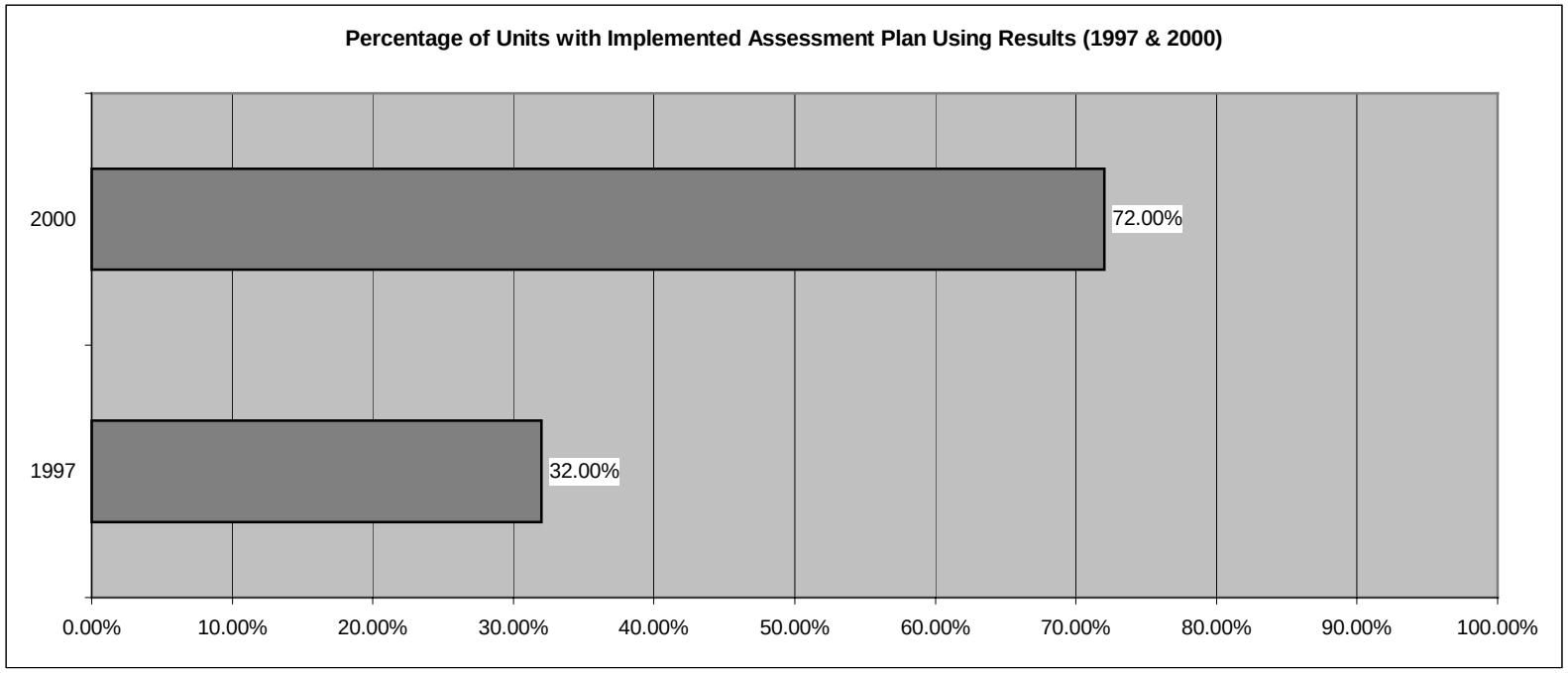

Level of Implementation (2000)
No Plan
10.3%
Plan but No
Implementation
16.2%
Plan
Implemented
73.5%

III. Percentage of All Units using Outcomes Assessment Results

Purpose of Graph: Represent the extent to which outcomes assessment activities results in some sort of action by the unit. These actions span from modifying assessment plans to making changes to their educational programs.

Comment on Results: A progressively higher percentage of units are using results from their outcomes assessment activities to improve their programs. This percentage has increased dramatically from 1997-2000 with over half the units using the results to make some sort of change. The second graph attributes for the factor that implementing an assessment plan is a required first step to using the results. From this perspective, close to three-quarters of the total units that are implementing an outcomes assessment plan are using the results of those activities.


Percentage of Total Units Using Results (1997 & 2000)
2000
1997
52.90%
14.80%
0.00%
10.00%
20.00%
30.00%
40.00%
50.00%
60.00%
70.00%
80.00%
90.00%
100.00%


Percentage of Units with Implemented Assessment Plan Using Results (1997 & 2000)
2000
1997
72.00%
32.00%
0.00%
10.00%
20.00%
30.00%
40.00%
50.00%
60.00%
70.00%
80.00%
90.00%
100.00%

IV. Description of How Results from Outcomes Assessment Methods are Used

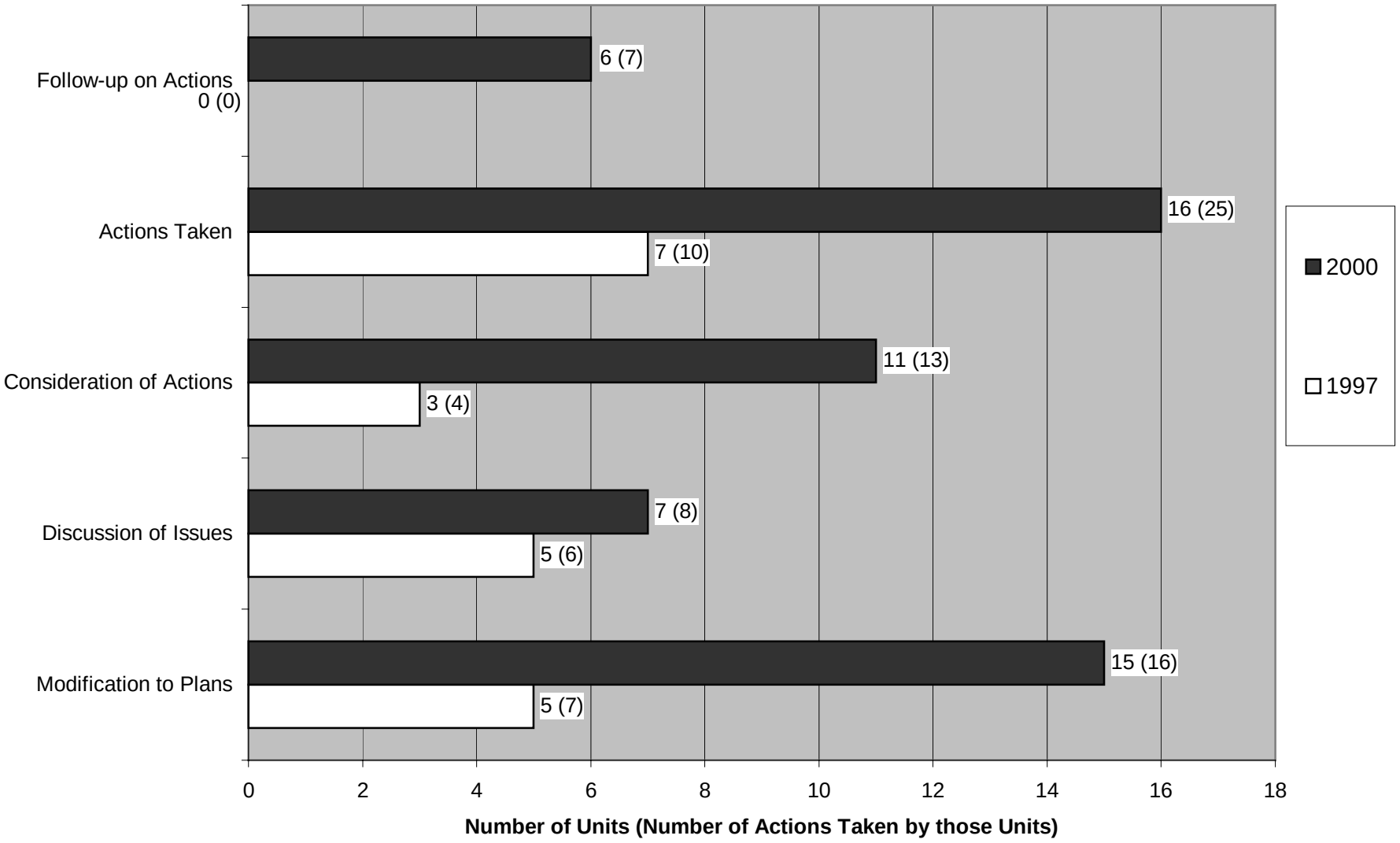
Purpose of Graph: Represents the varied ways programs are using the results of assessment methods. Actions have been categorized into five groups representing increasing levels of engagement with assessment results. The five categories are:

- Modifications to assessment plans based on results,
- Issues identified and discussed based on results,
- Consideration of actions to address identified issues,
- Actions taken to address identified issues,
- Follow-up on actions taken to address identified issues

The bars represent the number of units that used results as specified by each category. Represented in parentheses is the number of actions taken by those units. Groups where the number of actions is greater than the number of units indicates that at least one unit was involved in several distinct uses of the assessment results.

Comment on Results: In four of the five categories, there appears to be significant progress in how units use their assessment results. This is particularly so in the "Actions taken to address issues based on results". The category where this progress is not as apparent ("discussion of issues") remains relatively stable most likely because progress is occurring in other categories such a 'consideration of actions" and "actions taken". Although only a few units are following-up on their actions to see if those actions lead to the results they intend, that the use of assessment results for this purpose is increasing. This represents an evolving understanding of the use of evidence of student learning in on-going process of improving educational programs.

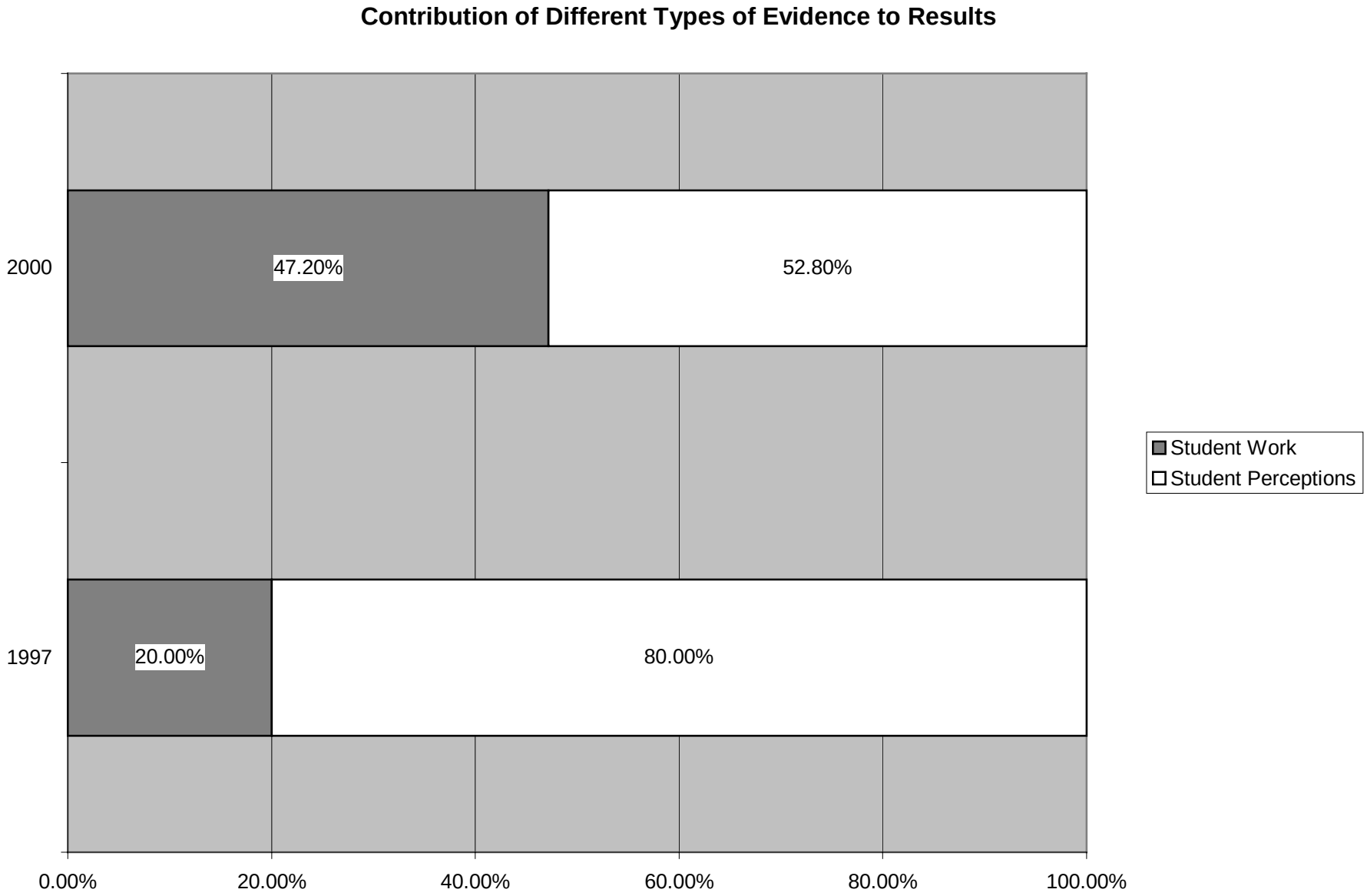
Levels of Engagement (1997 & 2000)



V. Contribution of Different Types of Evidence to Results

Purpose of Graph: Represents the extent to which student work (e.g. capstone course products, portfolios, essays, and exams) and student perceptions (e.g. student surveys, alumni surveys, and reflections on learning) contribute to discussions and actions. The evidence that primarily influenced the discussion or action was counted when both student work and student perceptions informed a result.

Comment on Results: Since 1997, student work and student perceptions have become equally influential in the use of assessment results. This indicates both assessment methods have been effectively implemented and informative in understanding the effectiveness of educational programs.


Contribution of Different Types of Evidence to Results
2000
1997
47.20%
52.80%
20.00%
80.00%
Student Work
Student Perceptions
0.00%
20.00%
40.00%
60.00%
80.00%
100.00%

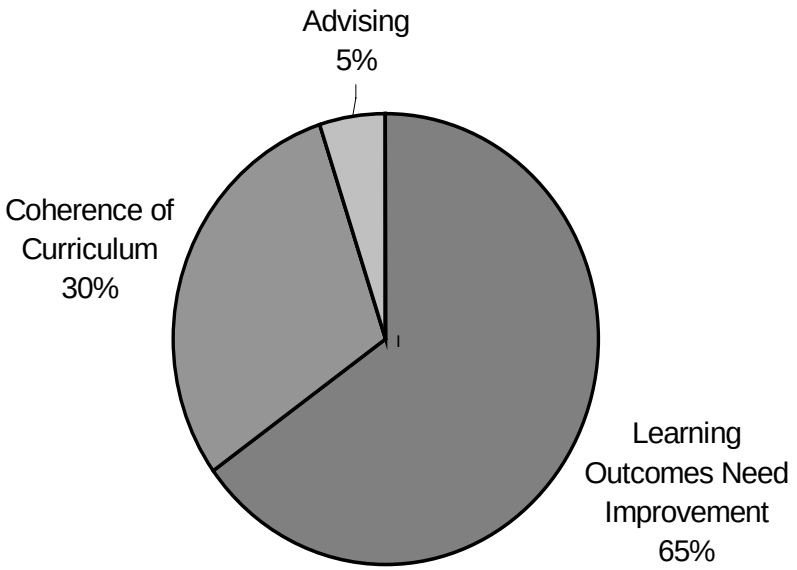
VI. Types of Issues Raised about Educational Program from Outcomes Assessment Results

Purpose of Graph: Describes the types of issues reportedly raised based on outcomes assessment results. Issues are sorted into five categories:

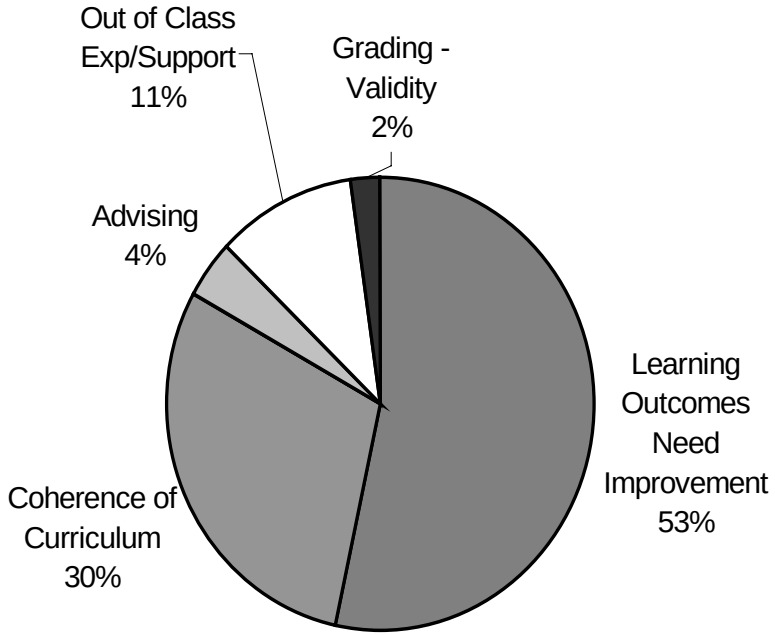
- Learning Outcomes Need Improvement – Students not achieving expected knowledge or skills
- Coherence of the Curriculum – Structure of the curriculum provides prerequisite knowledge and skills for successfully completing courses
- Advising – Dissatisfaction or failures of the advising process
- Out of Class Experiences or Support – Student engagement in learning outside the curriculum
- Grading: Validity – Extent to which assessment results correlate with course grades or gpa

Comment on Results: Identification of *learning outcomes that need improvement* and the *coherence of the curriculum* accounted for 95% of issues raised. By 2000, the types of issues raised were more diversified. *Learning outcomes needing improvement* and *coherence of the curriculum* still dominated (83%) but *advising*, *out of class experiences*, and *validity of grading* also arising. This suggests that outcomes assessment evidence is positively influencing instructional programs, but that results of outcomes assessment were expanding into other areas of the educational program that also play a role in the education of our students.

Types of Issues Raised (1997)



Types of Issues Raised (2000)



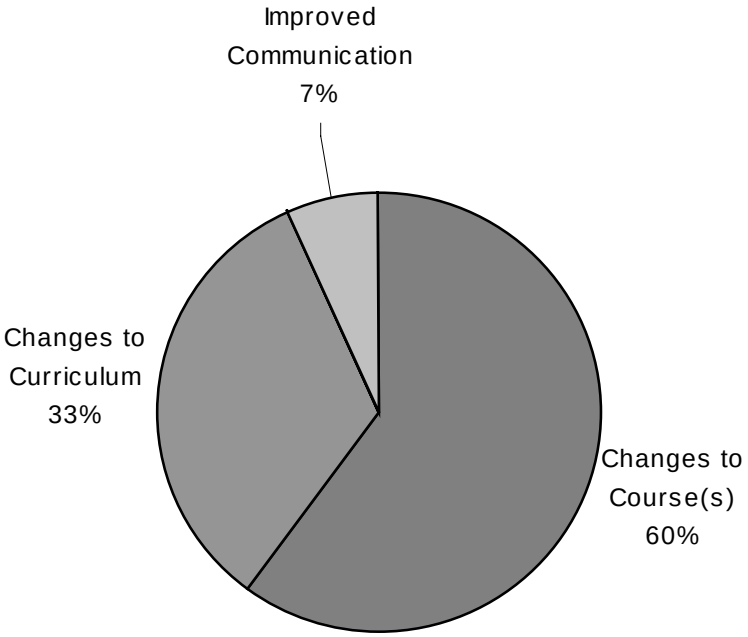
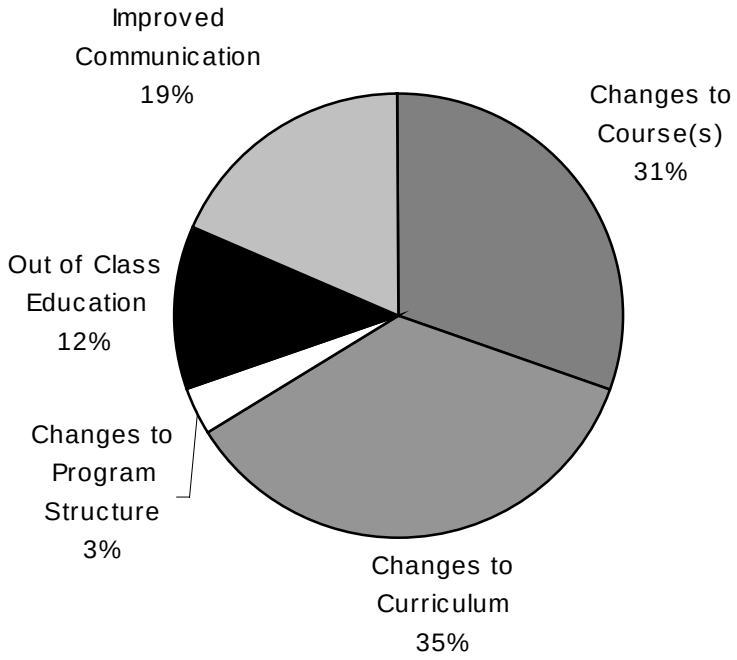
VII. Types of Actions taken in response to Issues raised in Outcomes Assessment Results

Purpose of Graph: Describe the types of actions taken in response to issues raised by outcomes assessment results. Actions are sorted into five categories:

- Changes to Course(s) – changing course outcomes, emphasis of certain skills
- Changes to Curriculum – addition or removal of courses in curriculum
- Changes to Program Structure – changing program requirements, program restructuring
- Changes to Out of Class Education – requirement of internships
- Improved Communication – clarifying purpose of curriculum among students/faculty, publishing outcomes in syllabi

Comment on Results: In 1997, the type of actions taken as a result of issues raised involved changes to existing courses and changes to the curriculum (93% of actions taken). In 2000, although these two actions still dominate (66% of actions taken) the diversity of actions increased including changes to program structure, changes to out of class education, and improved communication. As in the last graph, this diversification is positive indicating that units are expanding their thinking about how to address issues raised about their educational programs.

Types of Actions Taken (1997)



Types of Actions Taken (2000)