Empowering Excellence: Building an In-House Tool for Academic Program Assessment

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University of Houston

Texas Association of Institutional Research
Corpus Christi, Texas
February 27, 2025

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Background

- University of Houston
  - Founded in 1927
  - Flagship of the University of Houston System
  - Public, Tier One research university
  - Top 75 Public Universities: Forbes
  - 285 undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs
  - Fall 2024 enrollment: 47,980

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Why We Need a New Tool?

- The Office of Institutional Effectiveness (IE) explored purchasing a tool to support program assessment.
- UH Decided to build an in-house tool due to budget constraints and high costs.
- IE peers provided some direction on key functionalities, including:
  - Automating the current manual Assessment reporting process.
  - Data should be easily accessible instead of lengthy reports.
  - Improved efficiency by generating reports that focus on key metrics only.

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What is APAR?

- APAR – Academic Program Assessment Report
- Describes student learning outcomes and assessment activities for each degree program.
- Elements
  - List of assessment items for student performance
  - Assessment Results and Analysis
  - Program improvement plans and historical data
- Method
  - Performance data is collected, analyzed, and reported annually
  - Assessment items track program outcomes and student performance

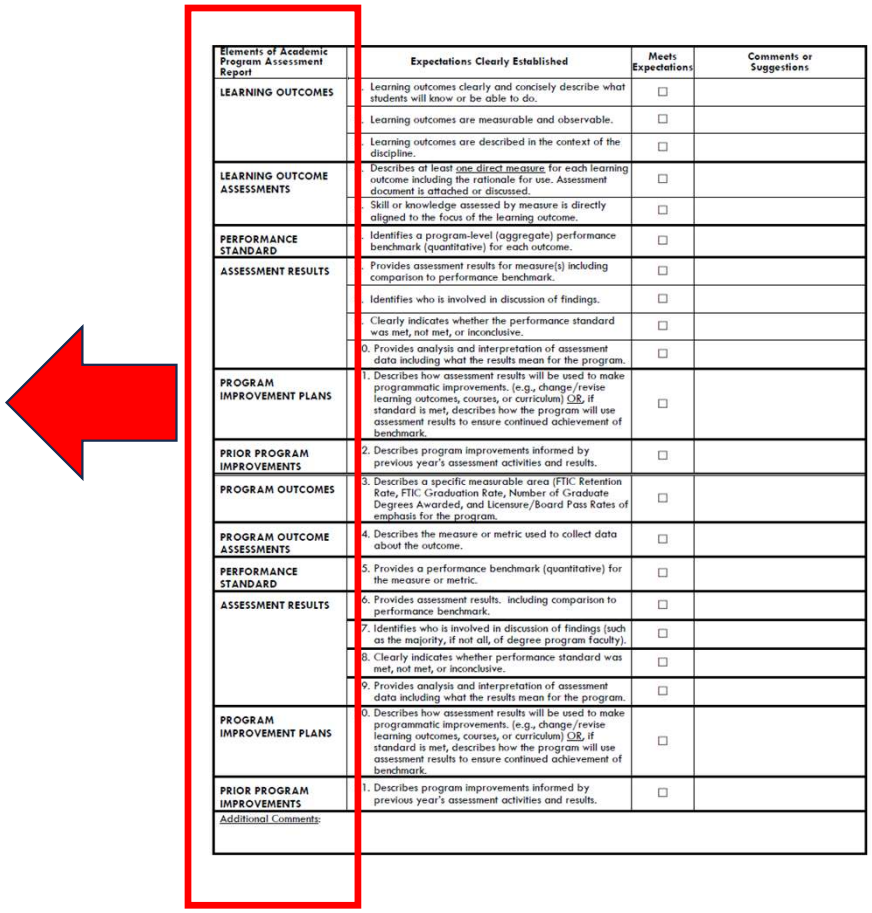
Assessment Report Checklist

- Manually created each year for every degree plan.
- Series of Word files created, turned into PDFs.
- Takes hours to complete.

Elements of Academic Program Assessment Report	Expectations Clearly Established	Meets Expectations	Comments or Suggestions
LEARNING OUTCOMES	1. Learning outcomes clearly and concisely describe what students will know or be able to do.	☐	
	2. Learning outcomes are measurable and observable.	☐	
	3. Learning outcomes are described in the context of the discipline.	☐	
LEARNING OUTCOME ASSESSMENTS	4. Describes at least one direct measure for each learning outcome including the rationale for use. Assessment document is attached or discussed.	☐	
	5. Skill or knowledge assessed by measure is directly aligned to the focus of the learning outcome.	☐	
PERFORMANCE STANDARD	6. Identifies a program-level (aggregate) performance benchmark (quantitative) for each outcome.	☐	
ASSESSMENT RESULTS	7. Provides assessment results for measure(s) including comparison to performance benchmark.	☐	
	8. Identifies who is involved in discussion of findings.	☐	
	9. Clearly indicates whether the performance standard was met, not met, or inconclusive.	☐	
	10. Provides analysis and interpretation of assessment data including what the results mean for the program.	☐	
PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT PLANS	11. Describes how assessment results will be used to make programmatic improvements. (e.g., change/revise learning outcomes, courses, or curriculum) OR, if standard is met, describes how the program will use assessment results to ensure continued achievement of benchmark.	☐	
PRIOR PROGRAM IMPROVEMENTS	12. Describes program improvements informed by previous year's assessment activities and results.	☐	
PROGRAM OUTCOMES	13. Describes a specific measurable area (FTIC Retention Rate, FTIC Graduation Rate, Number of Graduate Degrees Awarded, and Licensure/Board Pass Rates of emphasis for the program.	☐	
PROGRAM OUTCOME ASSESSMENTS	14. Describes the measure or metric used to collect data about the outcome.	☐	
PERFORMANCE STANDARD	15. Provides a performance benchmark (quantitative) for the measure or metric.	☐	
ASSESSMENT RESULTS	16. Provides assessment results. including comparison to performance benchmark.	☐	
	17. Identifies who is involved in discussion of findings (such as the majority, if not all, of degree program faculty).	☐	
	18. Clearly indicates whether performance standard was met, not met, or inconclusive.	☐	
	19. Provides analysis and interpretation of assessment data including what the results mean for the program.	☐	
PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT PLANS	20. Describes how assessment results will be used to make programmatic improvements. (e.g., change/revise learning outcomes, courses, or curriculum) OR, if standard is met, describes how the program will use assessment results to ensure continued achievement of benchmark.	☐	
PRIOR PROGRAM IMPROVEMENTS	21. Describes program improvements informed by previous year's assessment activities and results.	☐	
Additional Comments:			

Assessment Report Checklist

- Learning Outcome Assessments
- Assessment Results
- Performance Standard
- Performance Improvement Plans
- Prior Program Improvements



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Additional Comments:				

Assessment Report Template

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ACADEMIC PROGRAM ASSESSMENT REPORT

DEPARTMENT & PROGRAM:

ACADEMIC PROGRAM MISSION:

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Student Learning Outcome 1:

Student Learning Outcome Assessment:

Performance Standard:

Assessment Results & Analysis:

Program Improvement Plans:

Prior Program Improvement(s):

Are there any improvements based on previous year's assessment activities that are being reviewed this year? If so, what were the findings? Are this year's results tied to any changes made last year?

Student Learning Outcome 2:

Student Learning Outcome Assessment:

Performance Standard:

Assessment Results & Analysis:

Program Improvement Plans:

Prior Program Improvement(s):

Are there any improvements based on previous year's assessment activities that are being reviewed this year? If so, what were the findings? Are this year's results tied to any changes made last year?

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ACADEMIC PROGRAM ASSESSMENT REPORT

Student Learning Outcome 3:

Student Learning Outcome Assessment:

Performance Standard:

Assessment Results & Analysis:

Program Improvement Plans:

Prior Program Improvement(s):

Are there any improvements based on previous year's assessment activities that are being reviewed this year? If so, what were the findings? Are this year's results tied to any changes made last year?

PROGRAM OUTCOMES

Program Outcome 1 (Student Achievement – FTIC Undergraduate Graduation Rate [If Applicable]):
The percentage of a First Time in College **bachelors** (or equivalent) degree-seeking cohort who graduated within six academic years or less.

Program Outcome Assessment:

Performance Standard:

Assessment Results & Analysis:

Program Improvement Plans:

Program Outcome 2 (Student Achievement – FTIC Undergraduate Retention Rate [if applicable])
Percentage of First Time in College **bachelors** (or equivalent) degree-seeking undergraduates from the previous fall who are again enrolled in the current fall.

Program Outcome Assessment:

Performance Standard:

Assessment Results & Analysis:

Program Improvement Plans:

Prior Program Improvement(s):

Assessment Report Template

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Student Learning Outcome 1:

Student Learning Outcome Assessment:

Performance Standard:

Assessment Results & Analysis:

Program Improvement Plans:

Prior Program Improvement(s):

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Performance Standard:

Assessment Results & Analysis:

Program Improvement Plans:

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Comparing Our Options and Tools

- Qualtrics
- In-house App development
- Power BI/Tableau App
- Excel
- Independent 3rd Party Apps
  - Weave
  - Spol
  - Anthology

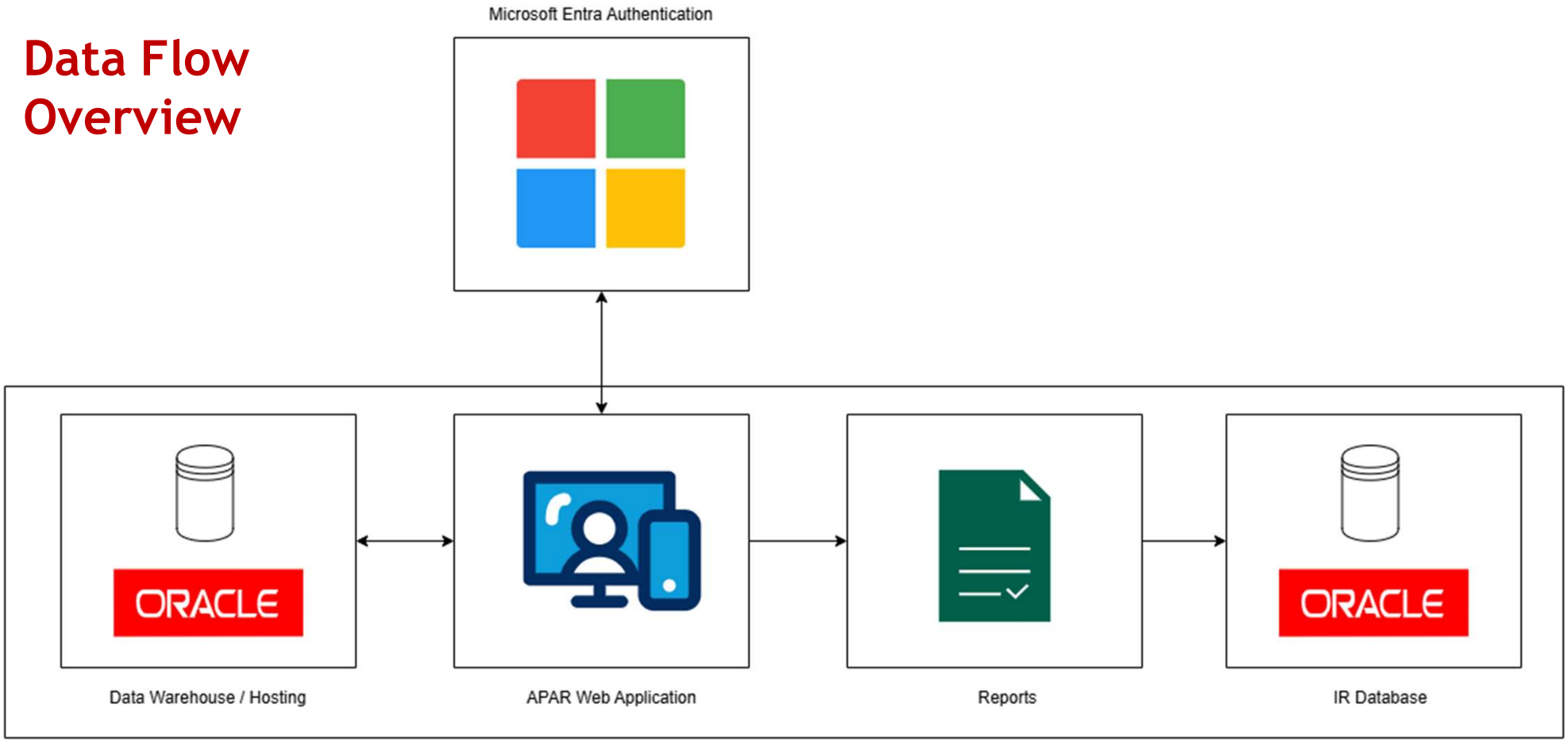
Choosing the Right Tool: Our Selected Option

- Qualtrics
- **In-house App development**
- Power BI/Tableau App
- Excel
- Independent 3rd Party Apps
  - Weave
  - Spol
  - Anthology

Tool Requirements & Challenges

- Security
- Data privacy issues
- Scalability
- Integration with the existing system
- Vendor dependency
- Cost management
- 24/7 support
- User Access control
- Customization flexibility
- User training and adoption
- Version control and updates
- Recovery and Backups

Data Flow Overview



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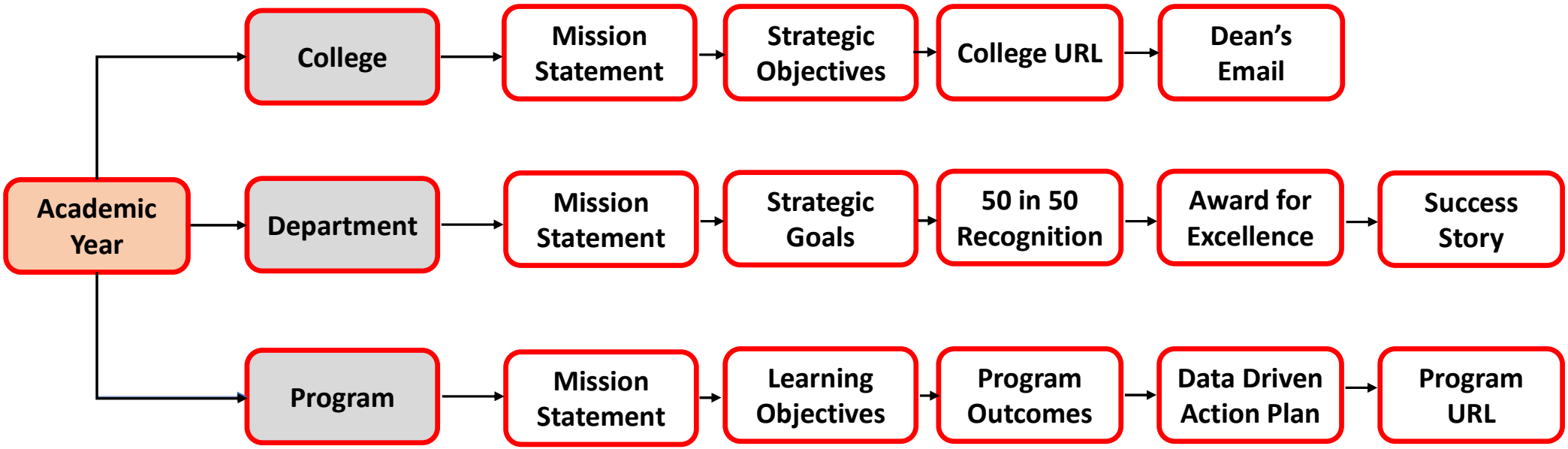
Report Items



APP Overview: Key Screenshots

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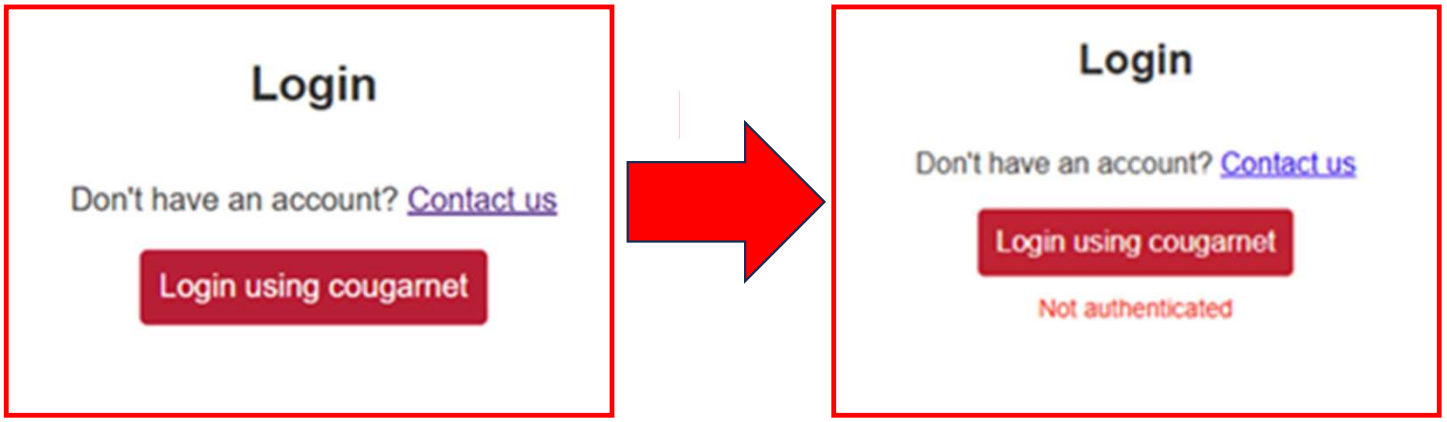

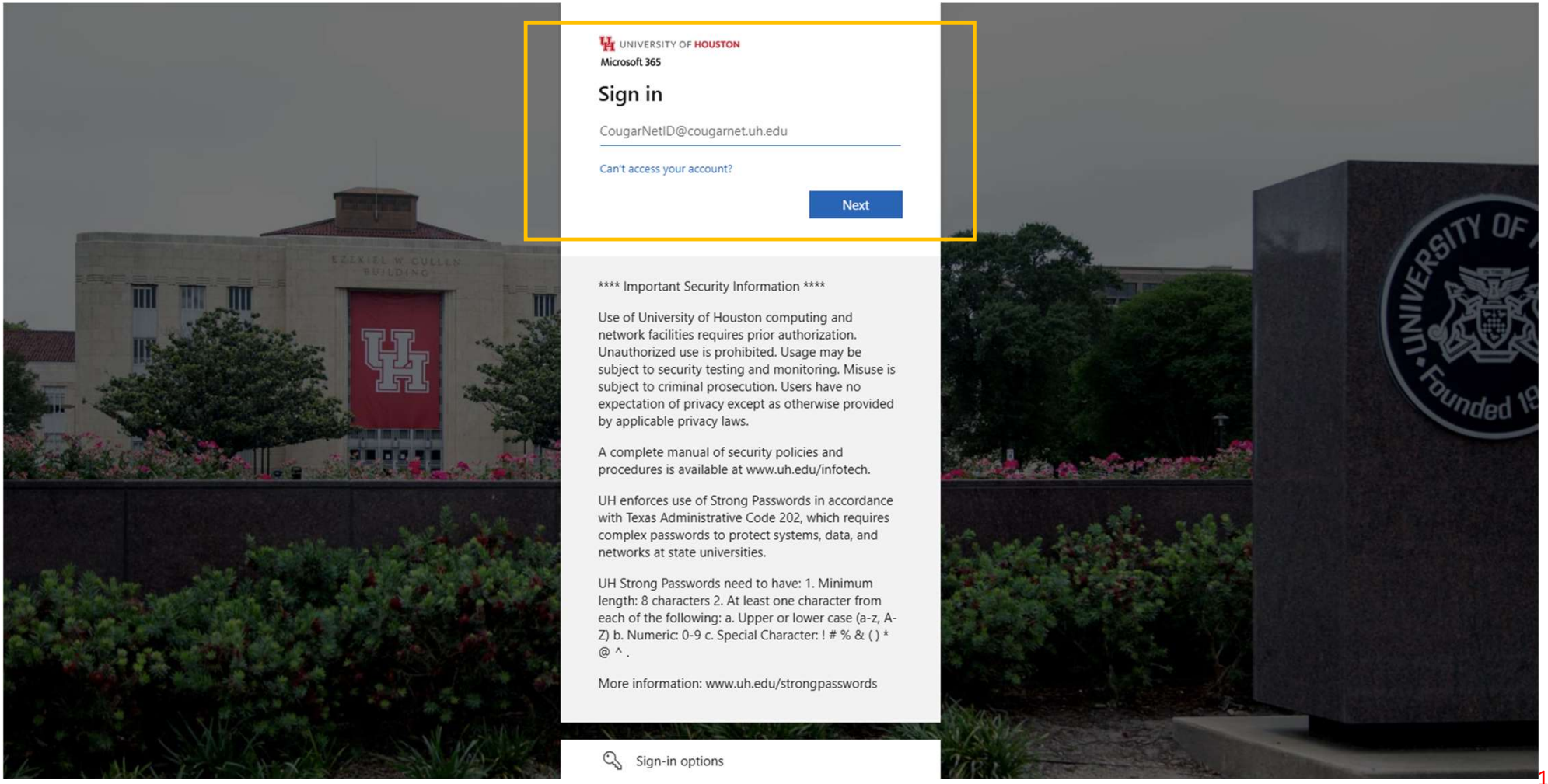
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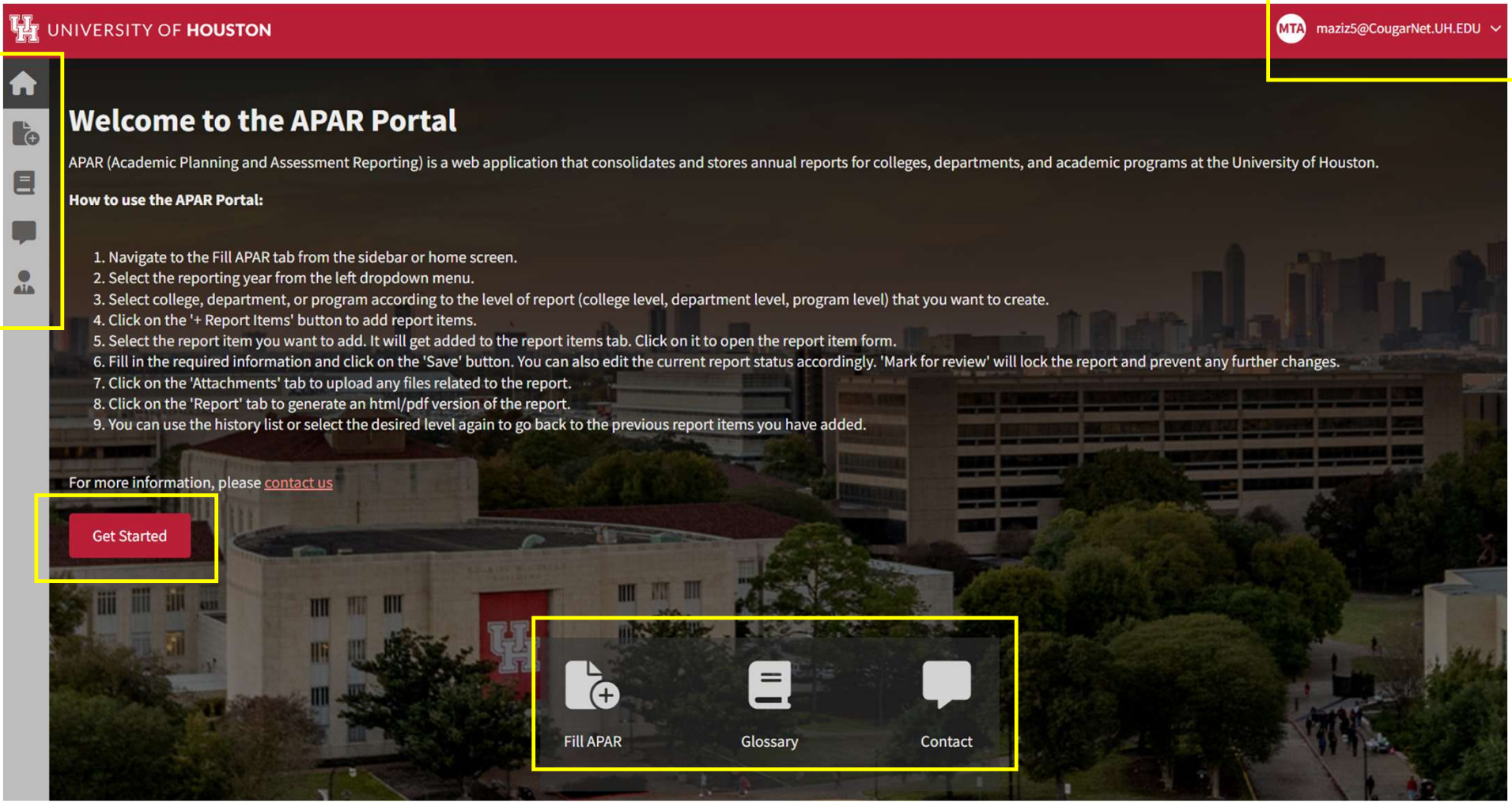
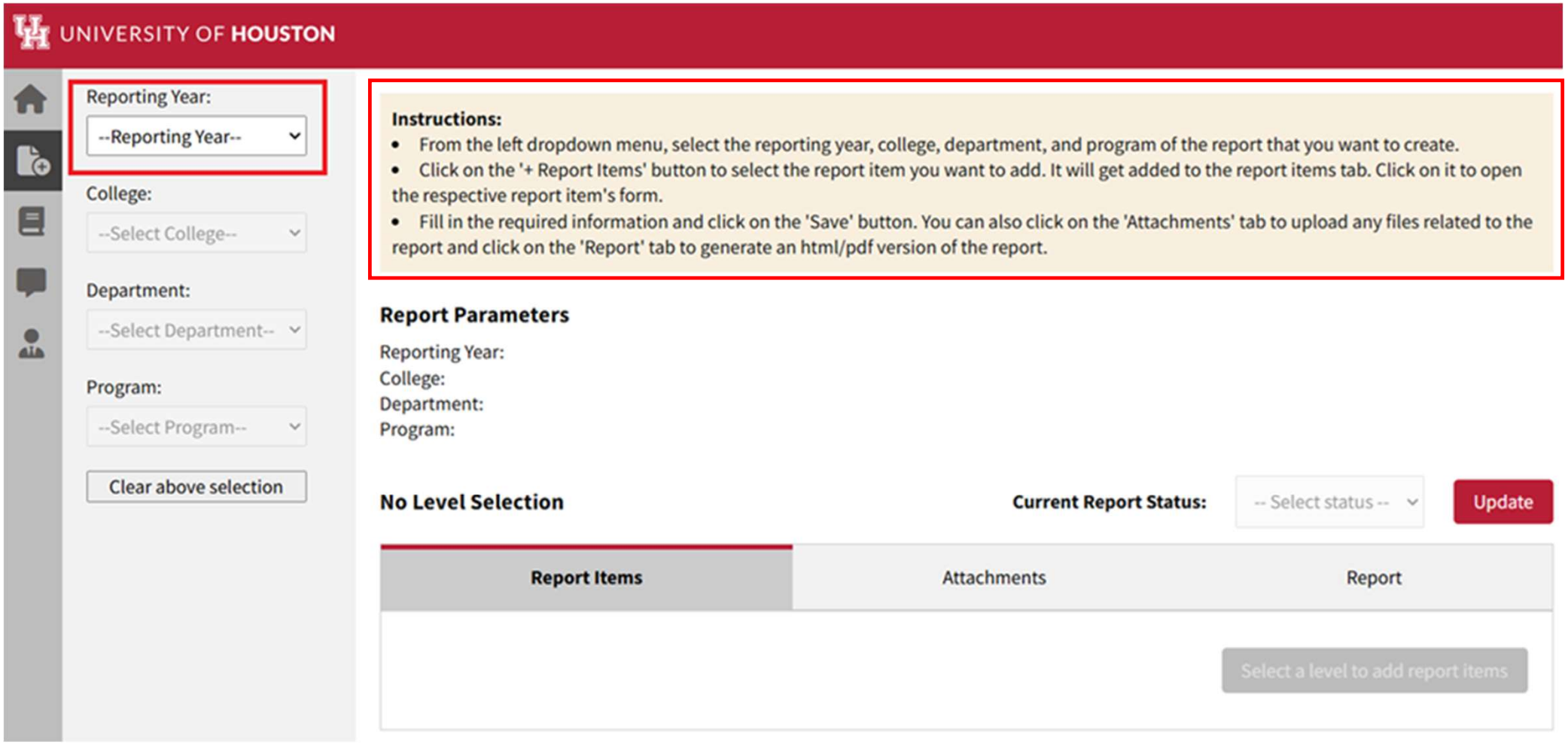
Microsoft 365
Sign in
CougarNetID@cougarnet.uh.edu
Can't access your account?
Next
**** Important Security Information ****
Use of University of Houston computing and network facilities requires prior authorization. Unauthorized use is prohibited. Usage may be subject to security testing and monitoring. Misuse is subject to criminal prosecution. Users have no expectation of privacy except as otherwise provided by applicable privacy laws.
A complete manual of security policies and procedures is available at www.uh.edu/infotech.
UH enforces use of Strong Passwords in accordance with Texas Administrative Code 202, which requires complex passwords to protect systems, data, and networks at state universities.
UH Strong Passwords need to have: 1. Minimum length: 8 characters 2. At least one character from each of the following: a. Upper or lower case (a-z, A-Z) b. Numeric: 0-9 c. Special Character: ! # % & ( ) * @ ^ .
More information: www.uh.edu/strongpasswords
Sign-in options


UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON
MTA maziz5@CougarNet.UH.EDU
Welcome to the APAR Portal
APAR (Academic Planning and Assessment Reporting) is a web application that consolidates and stores annual reports for colleges, departments, and academic programs at the University of Houston.
How to use the APAR Portal:
1. Navigate to the Fill APAR tab from the sidebar or home screen.
2. Select the reporting year from the left dropdown menu.
3. Select college, department, or program according to the level of report (college level, department level, program level) that you want to create.
4. Click on the '+ Report Items' button to add report items.
5. Select the report item you want to add. It will get added to the report items tab. Click on it to open the report item form.
6. Fill in the required information and click on the 'Save' button. You can also edit the current report status accordingly. 'Mark for review' will lock the report and prevent any further changes.
7. Click on the 'Attachments' tab to upload any files related to the report.
8. Click on the 'Report' tab to generate an html/pdf version of the report.
9. You can use the history list or select the desired level again to go back to the previous report items you have added.
For more information, please contact us
Get Started
Fill APAR
Glossary
Contact


UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON
Reporting Year:
--Reporting Year--
College:
--Select College--
Department:
--Select Department--
Program:
--Select Program--
Clear above selection
Instructions:
From the left dropdown menu, select the reporting year, college, department, and program of the report that you want to create.
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Report Parameters
Reporting Year:
College:
Department:
Program:
No Level Selection
Current Report Status:
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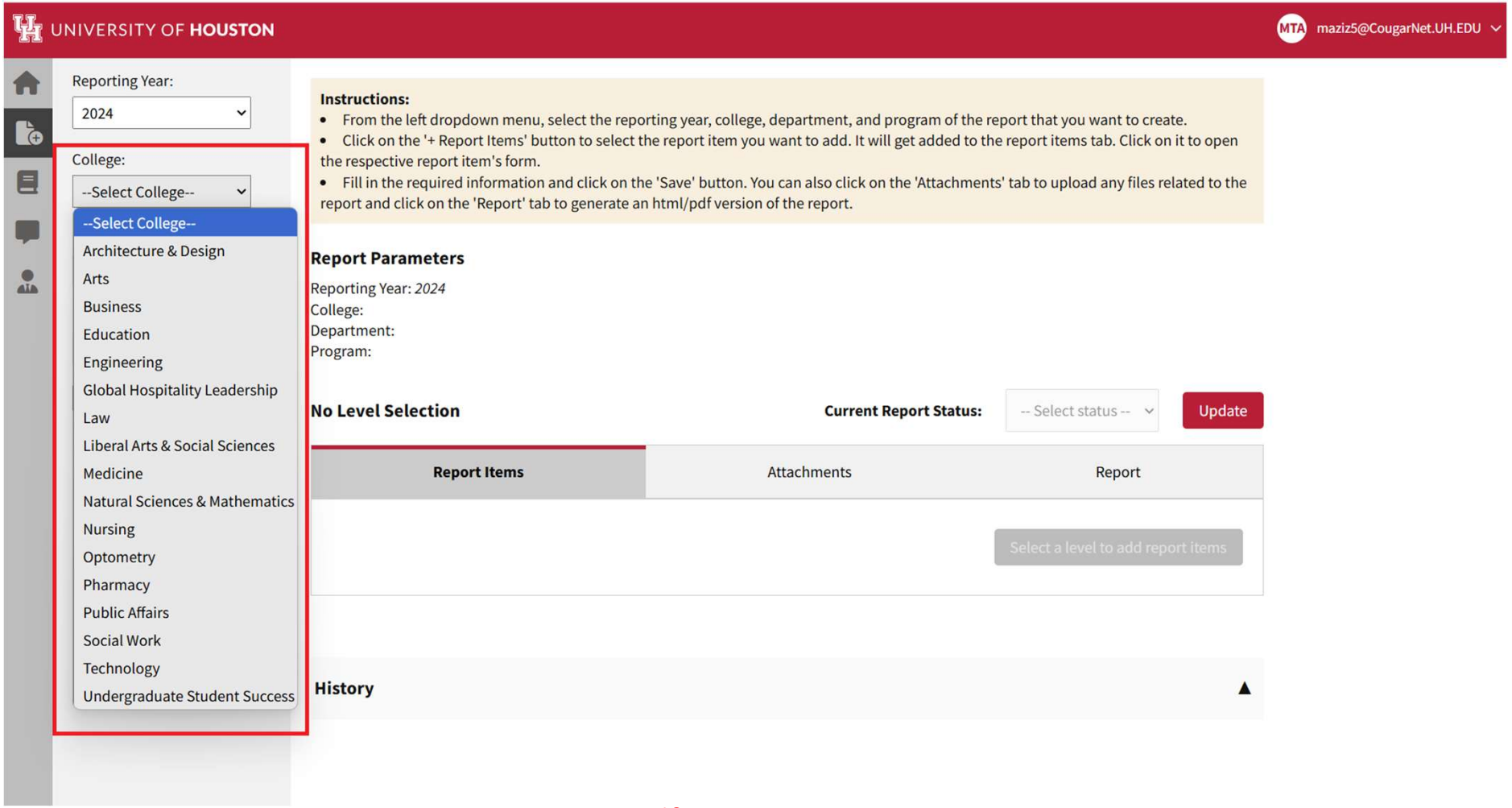
Update
Report Items
Attachments
Report
Select a level to add report items


UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON
MTA maziz5@CougarNet.UH.EDU
Reporting Year:
2024
College:
--Select College--
--Select College--
Architecture & Design
Arts
Business
Education
Engineering
Global Hospitality Leadership
Law
Liberal Arts & Social Sciences
Medicine
Natural Sciences & Mathematics
Nursing
Optometry
Pharmacy
Public Affairs
Social Work
Technology
Undergraduate Student Success
Instructions:
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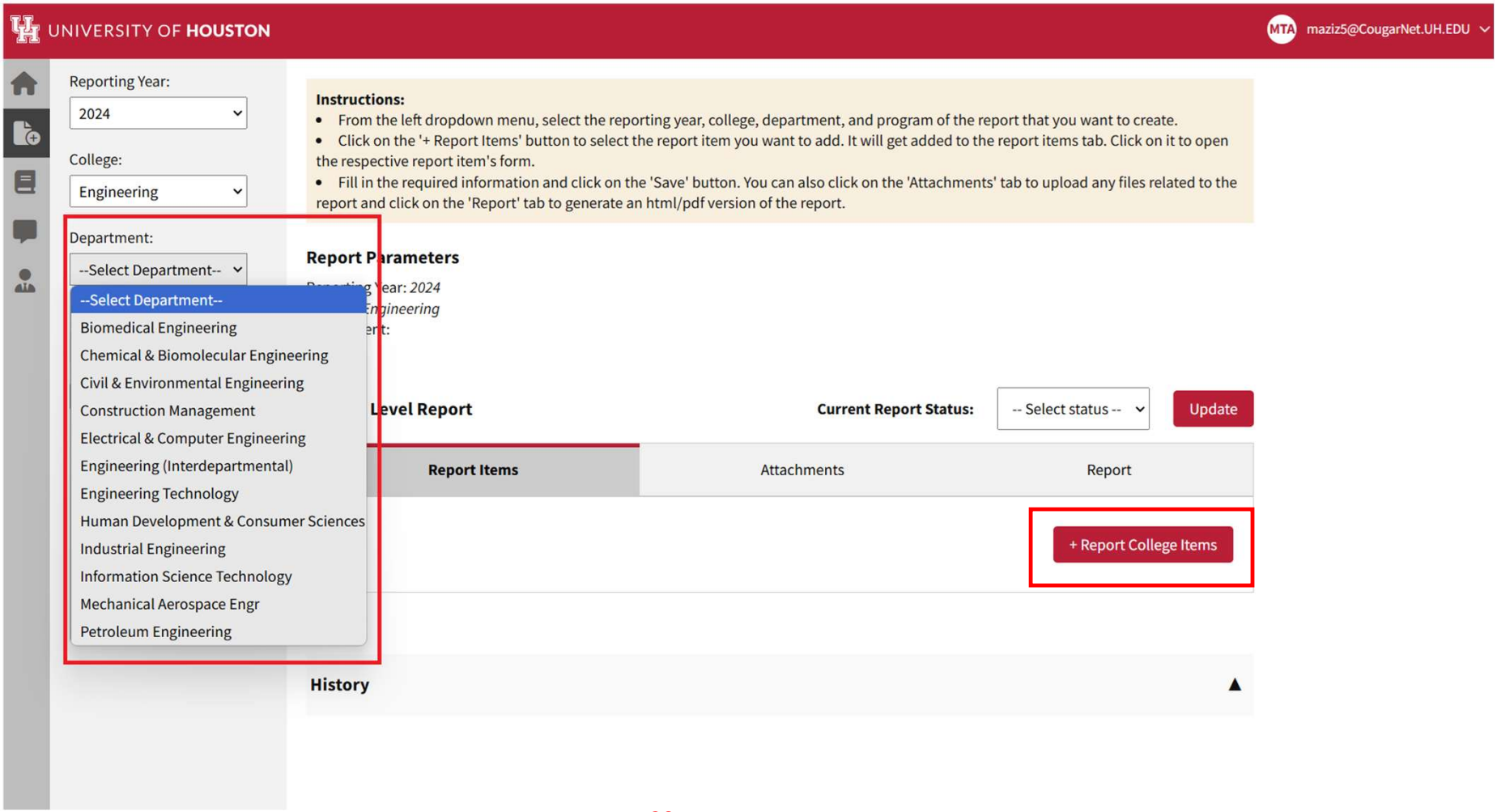
Report Parameters
Reporting Year: 2024
College:
Department:
Program:
No Level Selection
Current Report Status:
-- Select status --
Update
Report Items
Attachments
Report
Select a level to add report items
History


UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON
MTA maziz5@CougarNet.UH.EDU
Reporting Year:
2024
College:
Engineering
Department:
--Select Department--
--Select Department--
Biomedical Engineering
Chemical & Biomolecular Engineering
Civil & Environmental Engineering
Construction Management
Electrical & Computer Engineering
Engineering (Interdepartmental)
Engineering Technology
Human Development & Consumer Sciences
Industrial Engineering
Information Science Technology
Mechanical Aerospace Engr
Petroleum Engineering
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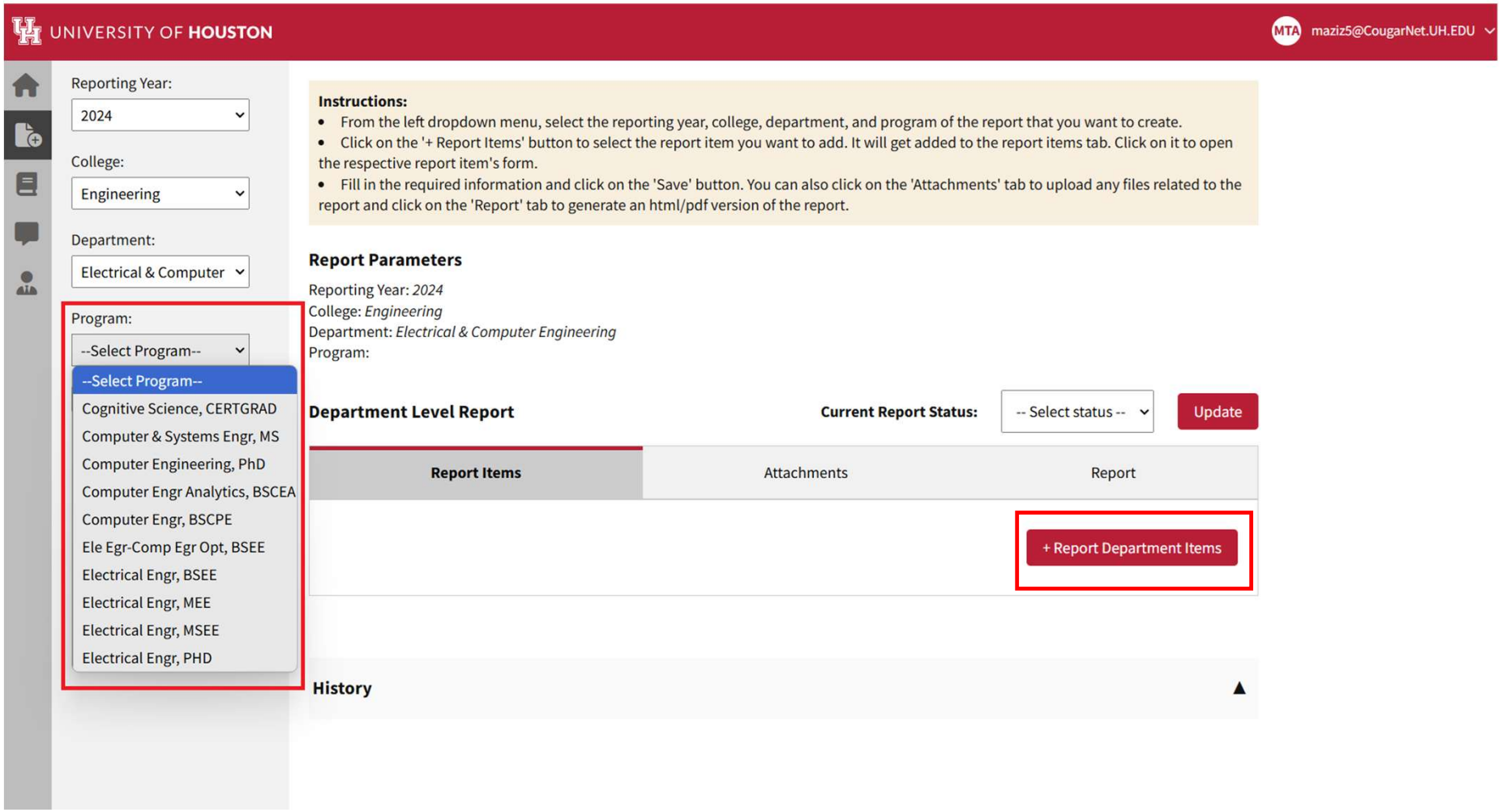
Report Parameters
Level Report
Current Report Status:
-- Select status --
Update
Report Items
Attachments
Report
+ Report College Items
History


UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON
MTA maziz5@CougarNet.UH.EDU
Reporting Year:
2024
College:
Engineering
Department:
Electrical & Computer
Program:
--Select Program--
--Select Program--
Cognitive Science, CERTGRAD
Computer & Systems Engr, MS
Computer Engineering, PhD
Computer Engr Analytics, BSCEA
Computer Engr, BSCPE
Ele Egr-Comp Egr Opt, BSEE
Electrical Engr, BSEE
Electrical Engr, MEE
Electrical Engr, MSEE
Electrical Engr, PHD
Instructions:
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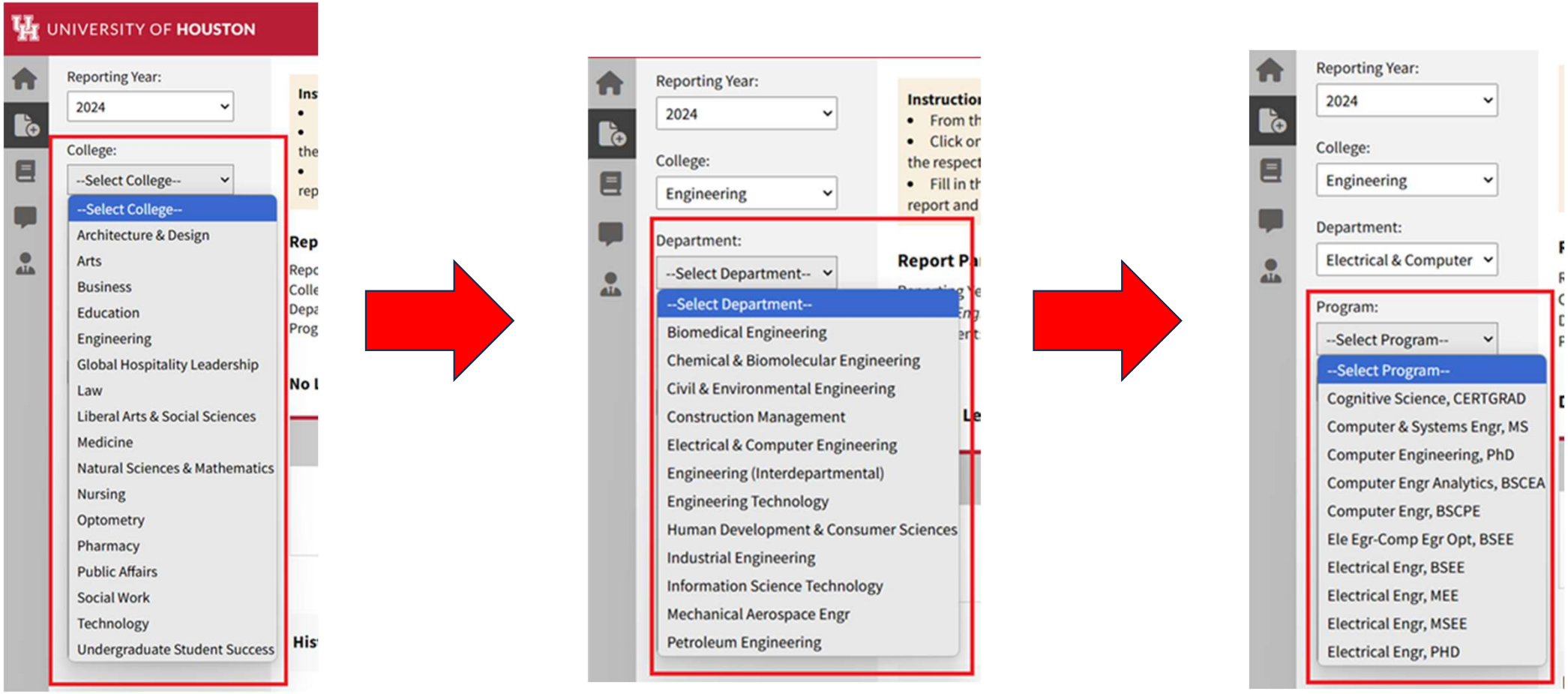
Report Parameters
Reporting Year: 2024
College: Engineering
Department: Electrical & Computer Engineering
Program:
Department Level Report
Current Report Status:
-- Select status --
Update
Report Items
Attachments
Report
+ Report Department Items
History


UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON
Reporting Year:
2024
College:
--Select College--
--Select College--
Architecture & Design
Arts
Business
Education
Engineering
Global Hospitality Leadership
Law
Liberal Arts & Social Sciences
Medicine
Natural Sciences & Mathematics
Nursing
Optometry
Pharmacy
Public Affairs
Social Work
Technology
Undergraduate Student Success
Reporting Year:
2024
College:
Engineering
Department:
--Select Department--
--Select Department--
Biomedical Engineering
Chemical & Biomolecular Engineering
Civil & Environmental Engineering
Construction Management
Electrical & Computer Engineering
Engineering (Interdepartmental)
Engineering Technology
Human Development & Consumer Sciences
Industrial Engineering
Information Science Technology
Mechanical Aerospace Engr
Petroleum Engineering
Reporting Year:
2024
College:
Engineering
Department:
Electrical & Computer
Program:
--Select Program--
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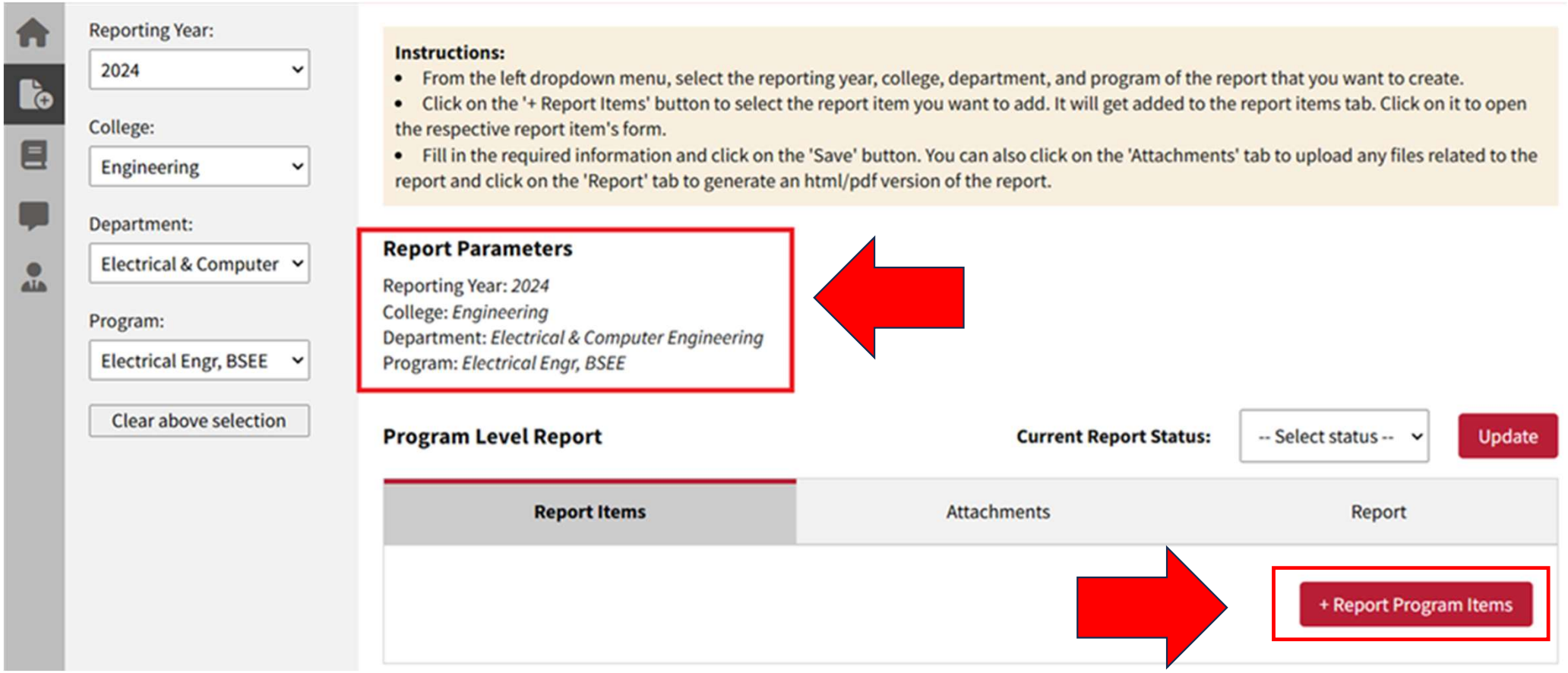
Cognitive Science, CERTGRAD
Computer & Systems Engr, MS
Computer Engineering, PhD
Computer Engr Analytics, BSCEA
Computer Engr, BSCPE
Ele Egr-Comp Egr Opt, BSEE
Electrical Engr, BSEE
Electrical Engr, MEE
Electrical Engr, MSEE
Electrical Engr, PHD


Reporting Year:
2024
College:
Engineering
Department:
Electrical & Computer
Program:
Electrical Engr, BSEE
Clear above selection
Instructions:
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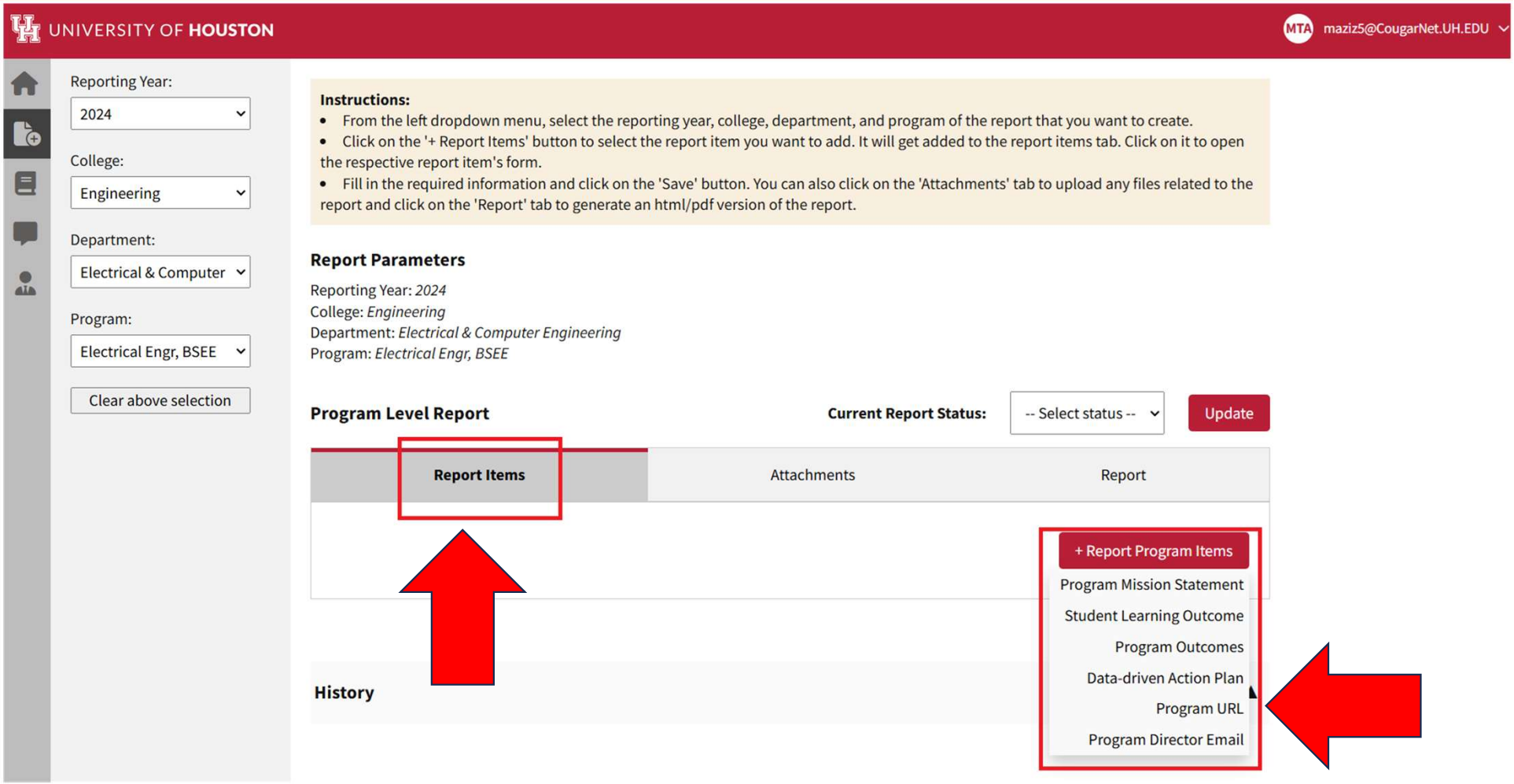
Report Parameters
Reporting Year: 2024
College: Engineering
Department: Electrical & Computer Engineering
Program: Electrical Engr, BSEE
Program Level Report
Current Report Status:
-- Select status --
Update
Report Items
Attachments
Report
+ Report Program Items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Reporting Year:
2024
College:
Engineering
Department:
Electrical & Computer
Program:
Electrical Engr, BSEE
Clear above selection
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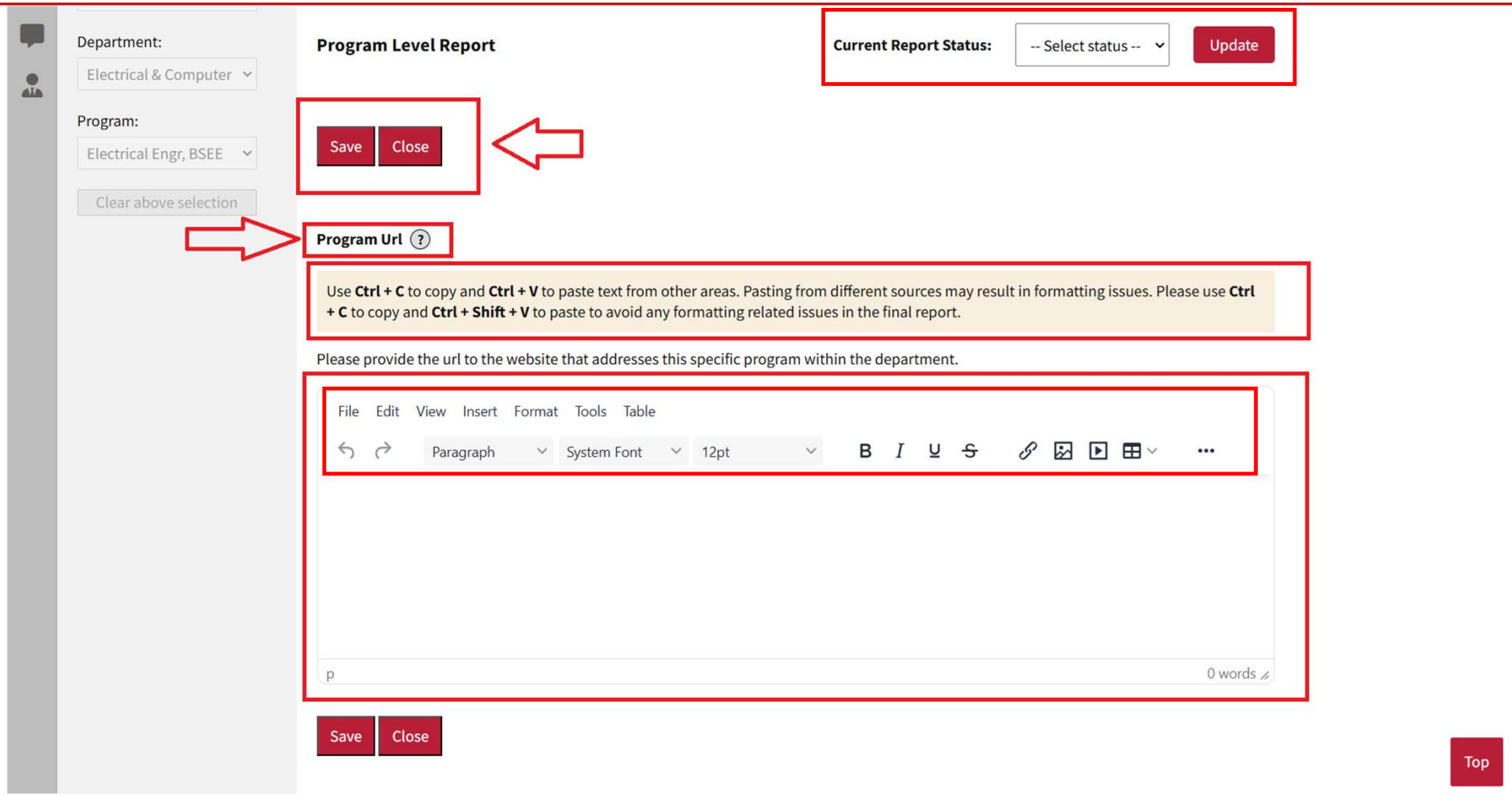
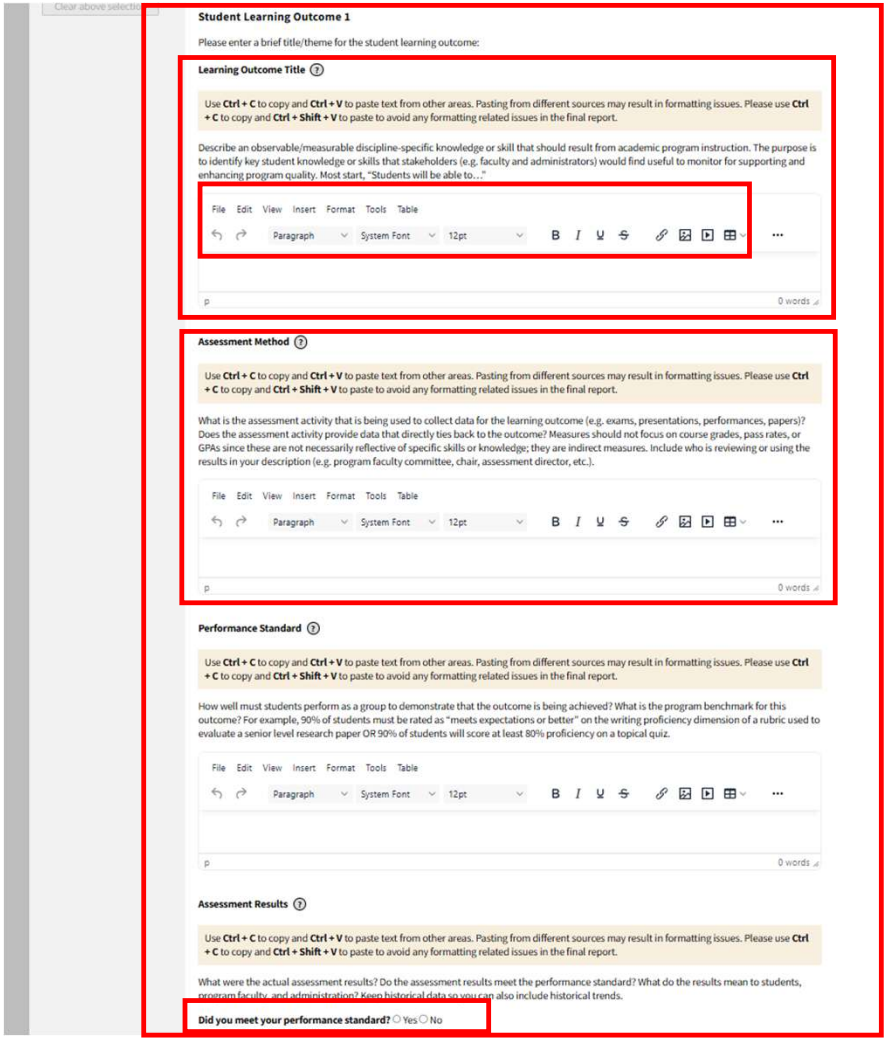
Report Parameters
Reporting Year: 2024
College: Engineering
Department: Electrical & Computer Engineering
Program: Electrical Engr, BSEE
Program Level Report
Current Report Status:
-- Select status --
Update
Report Items
Attachments
Report
+ Report Program Items
Program Mission Statement
Student Learning Outcome
Program Outcomes
Data-driven Action Plan
Program URL
Program Director Email
History


Department:
Electrical & Computer
Program:
Electrical Engr, BSEE
Clear above selection
Program Level Report
Current Report Status:
-- Select status --
Update
Save
Close
Program Url
Use Ctrl + C to copy and Ctrl + V to paste text from other areas. Pasting from different sources may result in formatting issues. Please use Ctrl + C to copy and Ctrl + Shift + V to paste to avoid any formatting related issues in the final report.
Please provide the url to the website that addresses this specific program within the department.
File Edit View Insert Format Tools Table
Paragraph
System Font
12pt
p
0 words
Save
Close
Top


Clear above selection
Student Learning Outcome 1
Please enter a brief title/theme for the student learning outcome:
Learning Outcome Title
Use Ctrl + C to copy and Ctrl + V to paste text from other areas. Pasting from different sources may result in formatting issues. Please use Ctrl + C to copy and Ctrl + Shift + V to paste to avoid any formatting related issues in the final report.
Describe an observable/measurable discipline-specific knowledge or skill that should result from academic program instruction. The purpose is to identify key student knowledge or skills that stakeholders (e.g. faculty and administrators) would find useful to monitor for supporting and enhancing program quality. Most start, "Students will be able to..."
File Edit View Insert Format Tools Table
Paragraph System Font 12pt
p
0 words
Assessment Method
Use Ctrl + C to copy and Ctrl + V to paste text from other areas. Pasting from different sources may result in formatting issues. Please use Ctrl + C to copy and Ctrl + Shift + V to paste to avoid any formatting related issues in the final report.
What is the assessment activity that is being used to collect data for the learning outcome (e.g. exams, presentations, performances, papers)? Does the assessment activity provide data that directly ties back to the outcome? Measures should not focus on course grades, pass rates, or GPAs since these are not necessarily reflective of specific skills or knowledge; they are indirect measures. Include who is reviewing or using the results in your description (e.g. program faculty committee, chair, assessment director, etc.).
File Edit View Insert Format Tools Table
Paragraph System Font 12pt
p
0 words
Performance Standard
Use Ctrl + C to copy and Ctrl + V to paste text from other areas. Pasting from different sources may result in formatting issues. Please use Ctrl + C to copy and Ctrl + Shift + V to paste to avoid any formatting related issues in the final report.
How well must students perform as a group to demonstrate that the outcome is being achieved? What is the program benchmark for this outcome? For example, 90% of students must be rated as "meets expectations or better" on the writing proficiency dimension of a rubric used to evaluate a senior level research paper OR 90% of students will score at least 80% proficiency on a topical quiz.
File Edit View Insert Format Tools Table
Paragraph System Font 12pt
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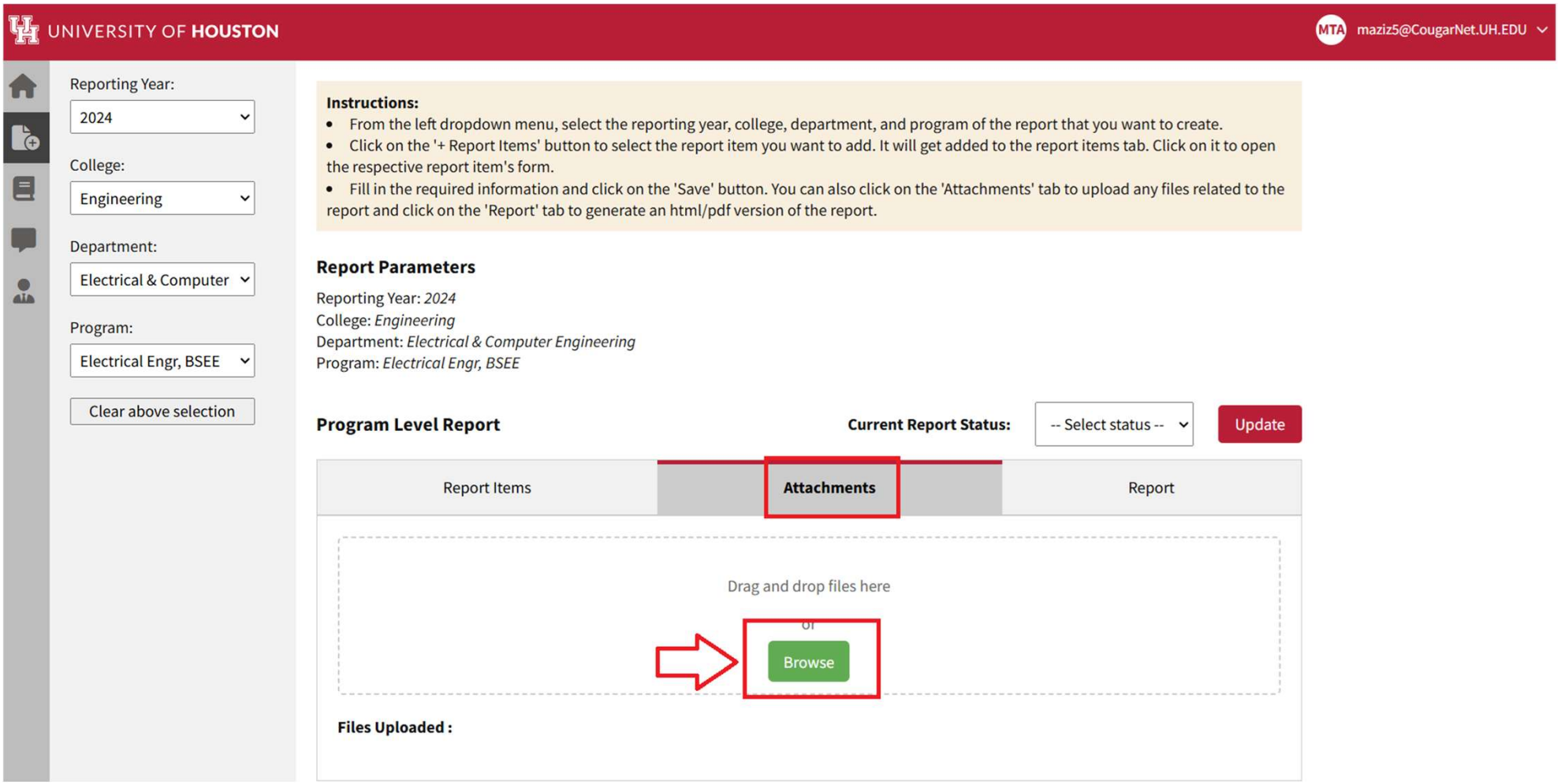
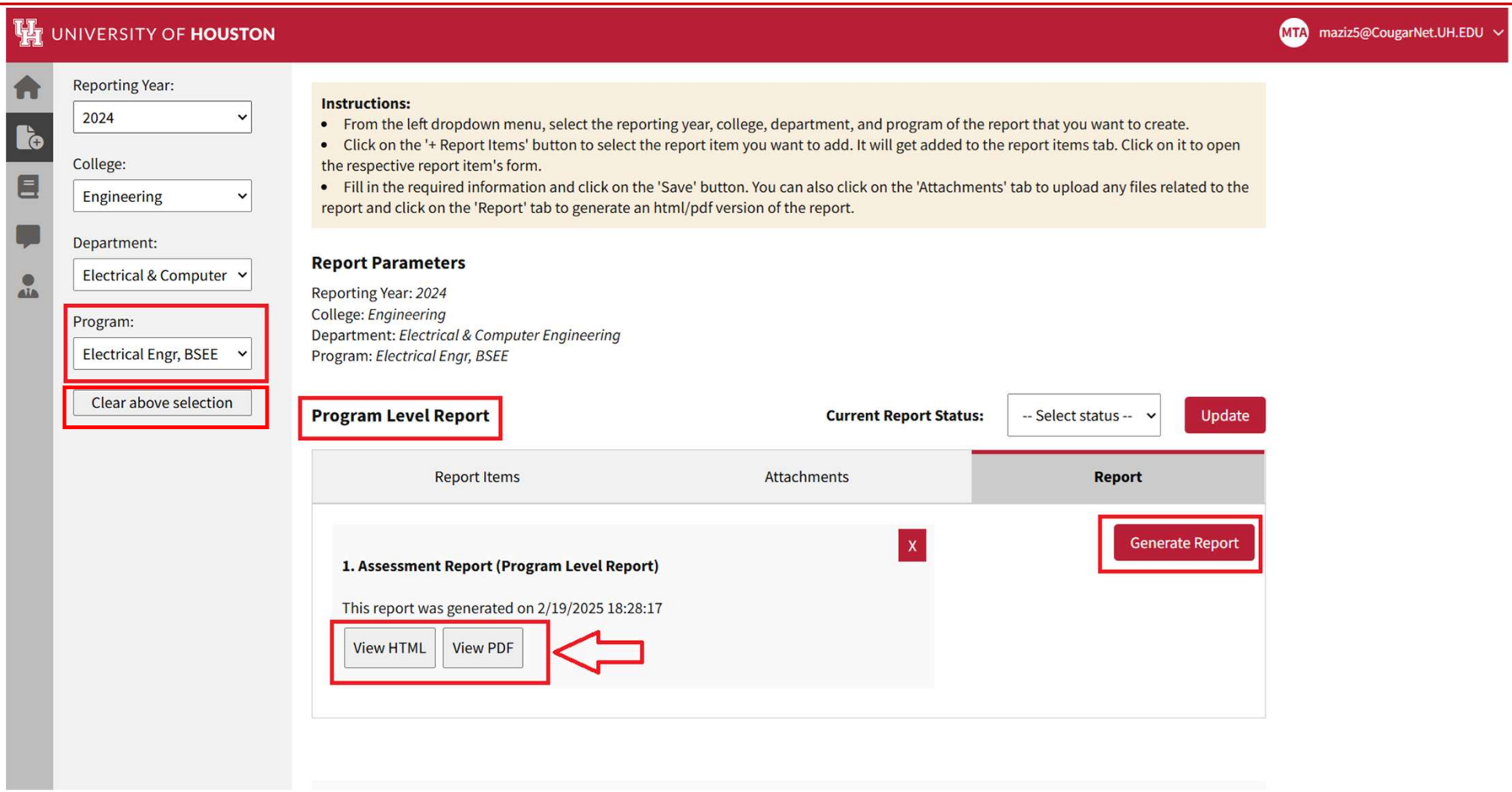
Assessment Results
Use Ctrl + C to copy and Ctrl + V to paste text from other areas. Pasting from different sources may result in formatting issues. Please use Ctrl + C to copy and Ctrl + Shift + V to paste to avoid any formatting related issues in the final report.
What were the actual assessment results? Do the assessment results meet the performance standard? What do the results mean to students, program faculty, and administration? Keep historical data so you can also include historical trends.
Did you meet your performance standard? Yes No


UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON
MTA maziz5@CougarNet.UH.EDU
Reporting Year:
2024
College:
Engineering
Department:
Electrical & Computer
Program:
Electrical Engr, BSEE
Clear above selection
Instructions:
From the left dropdown menu, select the reporting year, college, department, and program of the report that you want to create.
Click on the '+ Report Items' button to select the report item you want to add. It will get added to the report items tab. Click on it to open the respective report item's form.
Fill in the required information and click on the 'Save' button. You can also click on the 'Attachments' tab to upload any files related to the report and click on the 'Report' tab to generate an html/pdf version of the report.
Report Parameters
Reporting Year: 2024
College: Engineering
Department: Electrical & Computer Engineering
Program: Electrical Engr, BSEE
Program Level Report
Current Report Status:
-- Select status --
Update
Report Items
Attachments
Report
Drag and drop files here
or
Browse
Files Uploaded :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Reporting Year:
2024
College:
Engineering
Department:
Electrical & Computer
Program:
Electrical Engr, BSEE
Clear above selection
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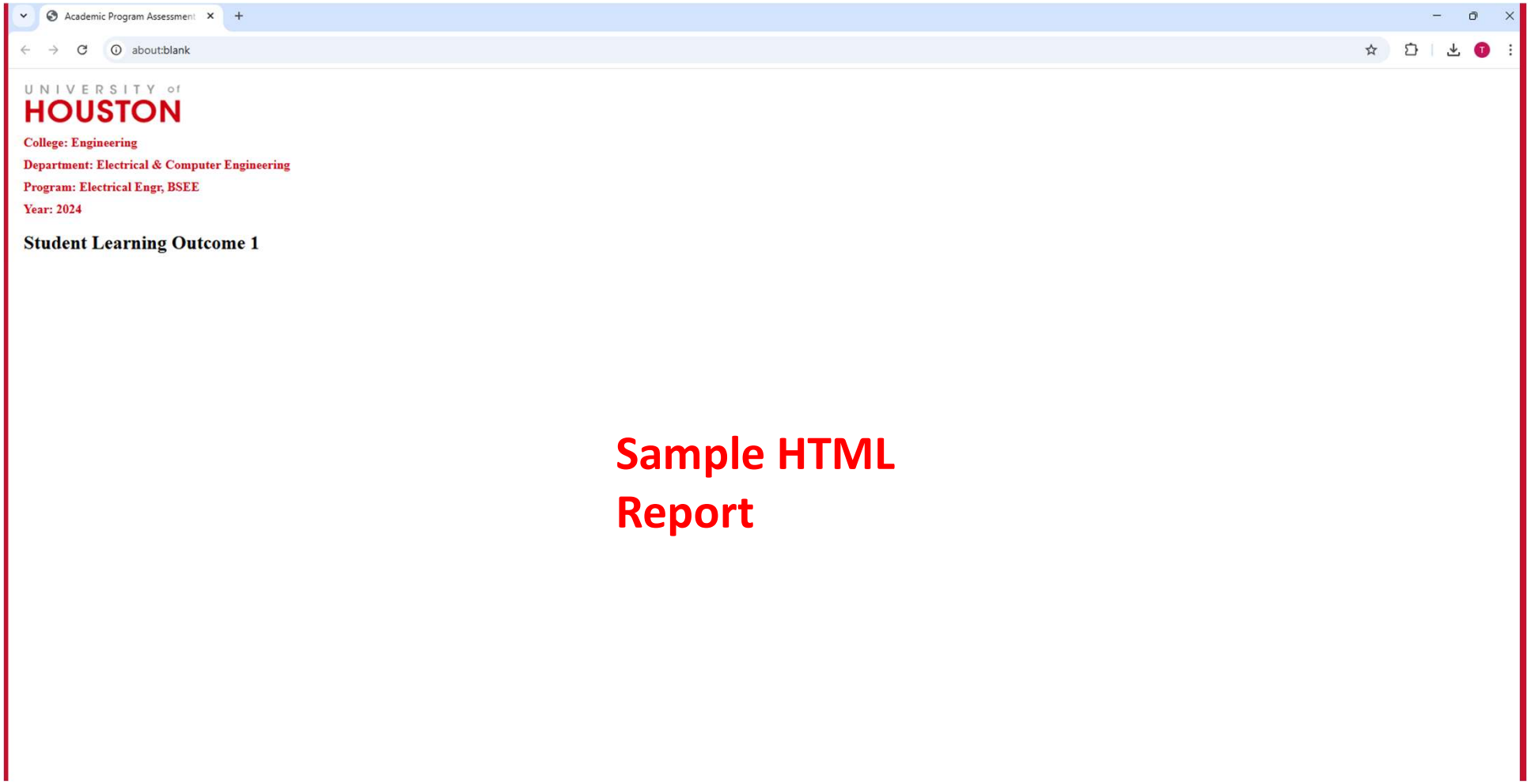
Report Parameters
Reporting Year: 2024
College: Engineering
Department: Electrical & Computer Engineering
Program: Electrical Engr, BSEE
Program Level Report
Current Report Status:
-- Select status --
Update
Report Items
Attachments
Report
Generate Report
X
1. Assessment Report (Program Level Report)
This report was generated on 2/19/2025 18:28:17
View HTML
View PDF



Sample HTML Report

UNIVERSITY of
HOUSTON

College: Engineering

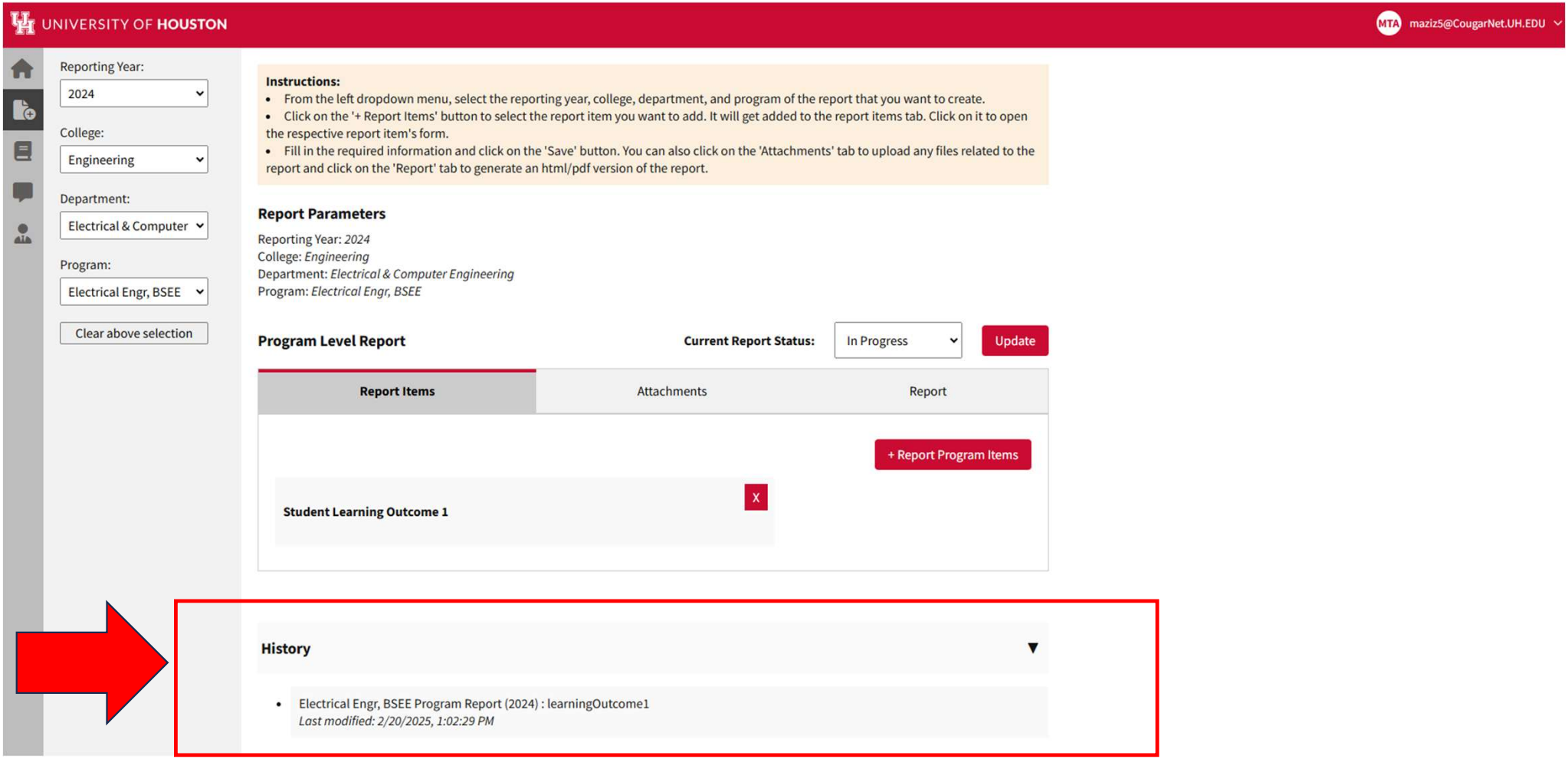
Department: Electrical & Computer Engineering

Program: Electrical Engr, BSEE

Year: 2024

Student Learning Outcome 1

Sample PDF Report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MTA maziz5@CougarNet.UH.EDU
Reporting Year:
2024
College:
Engineering
Department:
Electrical & Computer
Program:
Electrical Engr, BSEE
Clear above selection
Instructions:
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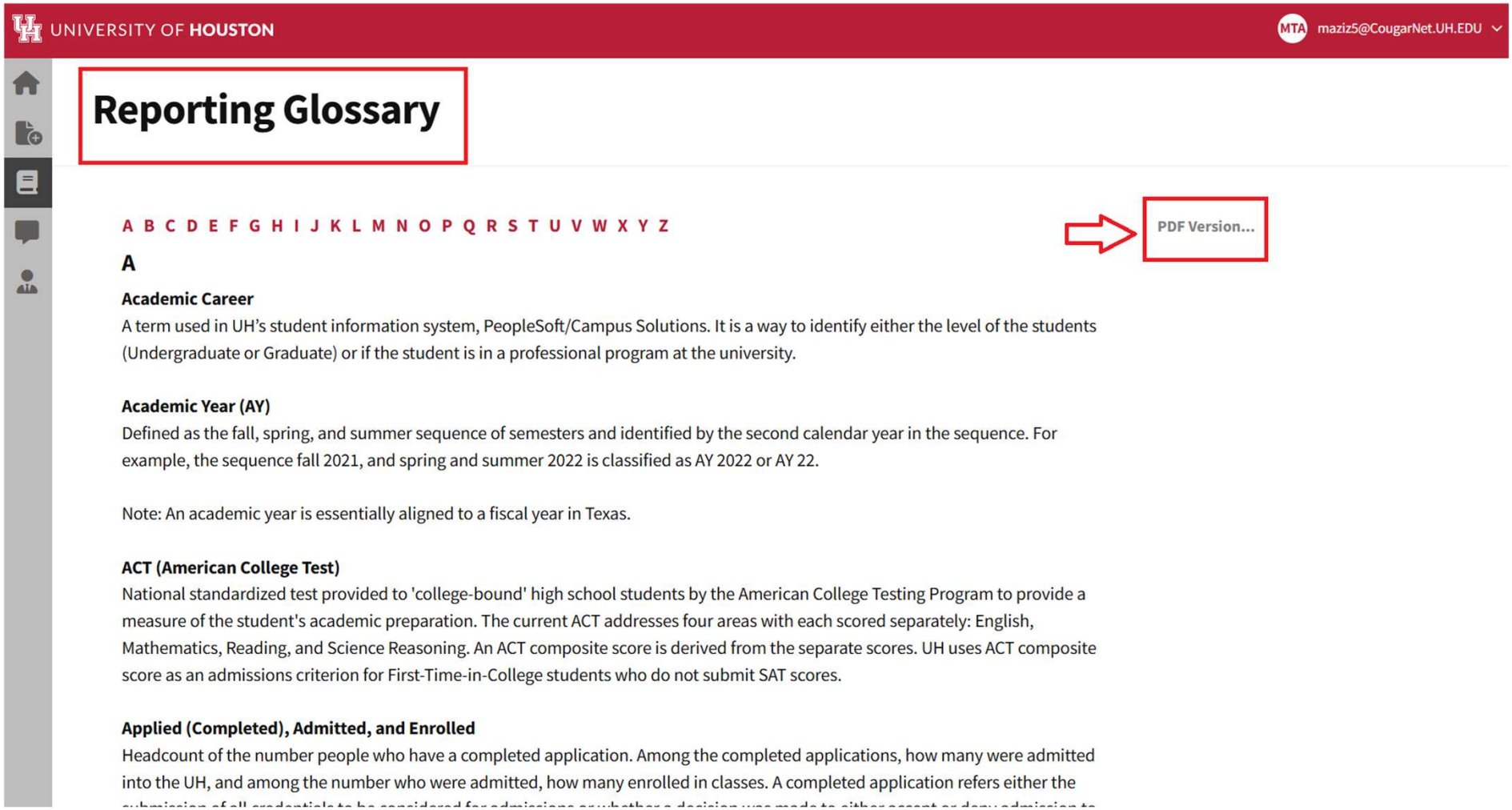
Report Parameters
Reporting Year: 2024
College: Engineering
Department: Electrical & Computer Engineering
Program: Electrical Engr, BSEE
Program Level Report
Current Report Status:
In Progress
Update
Report Items
Attachments
Report
+ Report Program Items
Student Learning Outcome 1
X
History
Electrical Engr, BSEE Program Report (2024) : learningOutcome1
Last modified: 2/20/2025, 1:02:29 PM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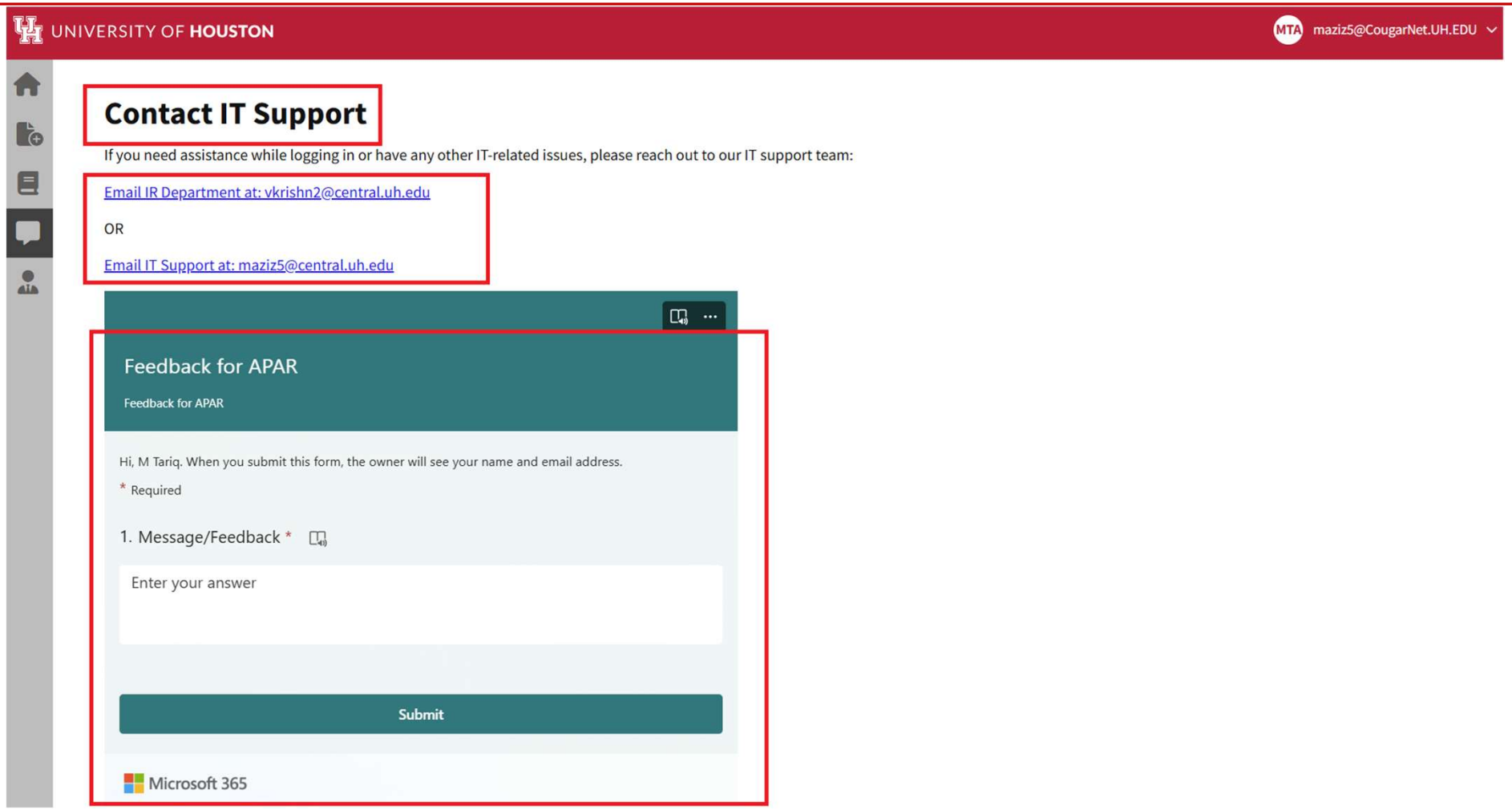
Reporting Glossary
A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z
PDF Version...
A
Academic Career
A term used in UH's student information system, PeopleSoft/Campus Solutions. It is a way to identify either the level of the students (Undergraduate or Graduate) or if the student is in a professional program at the university.
Academic Year (AY)
Defined as the fall, spring, and summer sequence of semesters and identified by the second calendar year in the sequence. For example, the sequence fall 2021, and spring and summer 2022 is classified as AY 2022 or AY 22.
Note: An academic year is essentially aligned to a fiscal year in Texas.
ACT (American College Test)
National standardized test provided to 'college-bound' high school students by the American College Testing Program to provide a measure of the student's academic preparation. The current ACT addresses four areas with each scored separately: English, Mathematics, Reading, and Science Reasoning. An ACT composite score is derived from the separate scores. UH uses ACT composite score as an admissions criterion for First-Time-in-College students who do not submit SAT scores.
Applied (Completed), Admitted, and Enrolled
Headcount of the number people who have a completed application. Among the completed applications, how many were admitted into the UH, and among the number who were admitted, how many enrolled in classes. A completed application refers either the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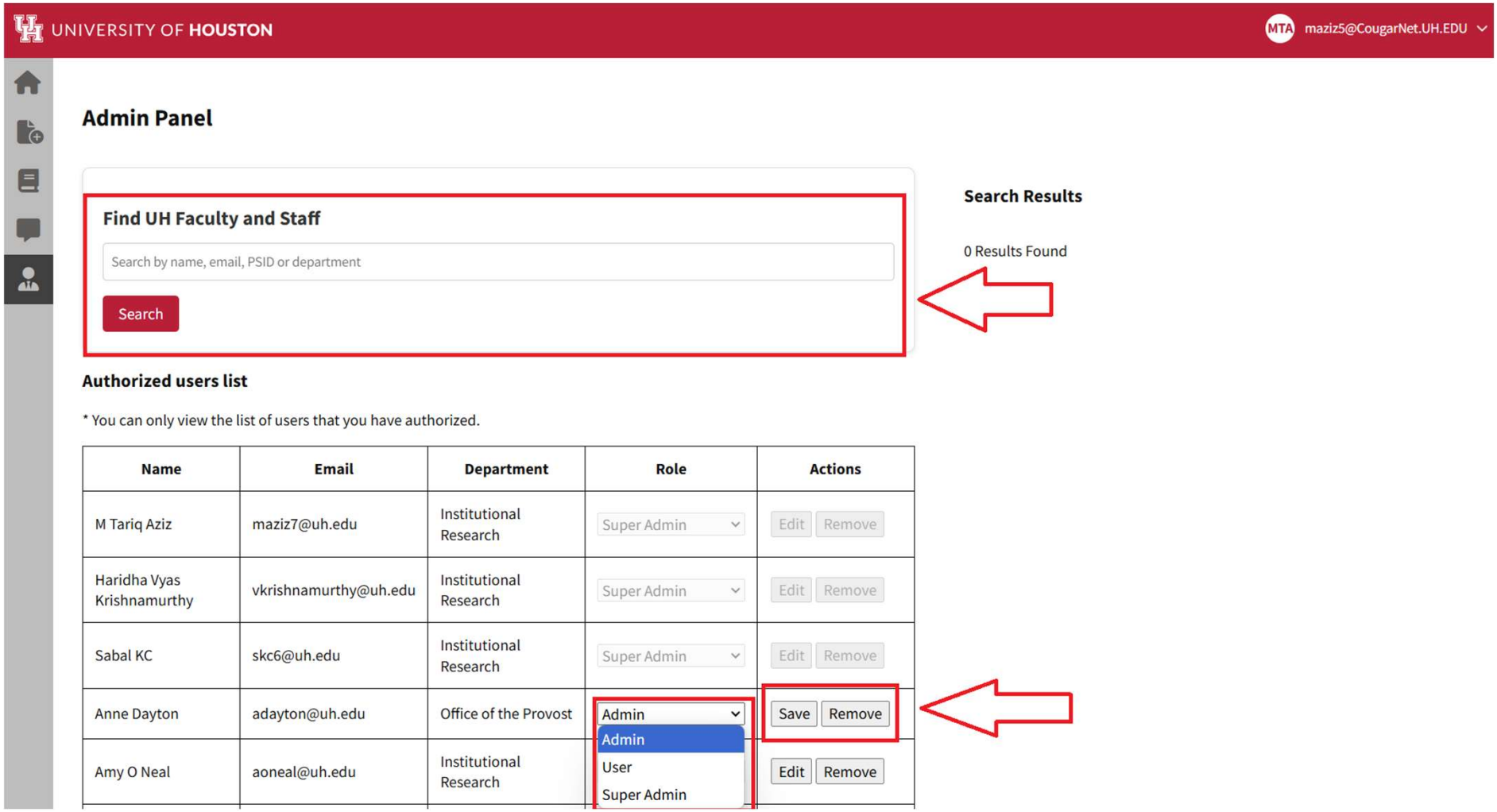
Contact IT Support
If you need assistance while logging in or have any other IT-related issues, please reach out to our IT support team:
Email IR Department at: vkrishn2@central.uh.edu
OR
Email IT Support at: maziz5@central.uh.edu
Feedback for APAR
Feedback for APAR
Hi, M Tariq. When you submit this form, the owner will see your name and email address.
* Required
1. Message/Feedback *
Enter your answer
Submit
Microsoft 365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Admin Panel
Find UH Faculty and Staff
Search by name, email, PSID or department
Search
Search Results
0 Results Found
Authorized users list
* You can only view the list of users that you have authorized.
Name
Email
Department
Role
Actions
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Institutional Research
Super Admin
Edit
Remove
Haridha Vyas Krishnamurthy
vkrishnamurthy@uh.edu
Institutional Research
Super Admin
Edit
Remove
Sabal KC
skc6@uh.edu
Institutional Research
Super Admin
Edit
Remove
Anne Dayton
adayton@uh.edu
Office of the Provost
Admin
Admin
User
Super Admin
Save
Remove
Amy O Neal
aoneal@uh.edu
Institutional Research
Edit
Remove

Lesson Learned: What We Wish We'd known

- Security First, Always!
- Full Stack Development & Integration (Oracle SQL Developer, Tableau, Microsoft 365, Various Programming Languages)
- Designing a User-Friendly Interface: Balancing UI/UX Design
- Managing Code Complexity & Database Architecture
- Security Protocols: User Authentication & Role-Based Authorization
- Cross-Functional Collaboration & Teamwork
- Project Planning, Executing, and Post-launch Maintenance

Future Work

- Separate links for Production, Development, and Test Environments.
- Integration with UH online services for single sign-on.
- Checklist of missing items.
- Integration with Tableau for key metrics and KPIs.
- Condensed one-page report called Red & White report.
- Access to multiple departments.
- PDF read-only access.

Any questions?

Acknowledgment

Active Team

Vyas Krishnamurthy – Associate Director Institutional Research

Tariq Aziz – BI Developer

Sabal KC – Research Assistant

Tuong Ho – Manager Enterprise IT Team

Alan Alexandro – Enterprise System Data Warehouse Team

Special Thanks

Dr. Susan Moreno – Visionary Leadership, Mentorship, and Guidance

Former Team Members

Antara Sarkar – BI Developer

Sai Ambati – BI Developer

Arjun Rao – Research Assistant

Thank you!

Contact:
Tariq Aziz: maziz5@central.uh.edu

Scan the QR code to complete the session survey.

Texas Association for Institutional Research

Annual Conference: February 25-28, 2025
Omni Hotel in Corpus Christi, TX