

University Assessment Committee Meeting

Friday, May 16, 2014; 11:30 AM – 1:30 PM
John Spotts Room

Minutes

Members Present: Corley Dennison, Andrew Gooding, Maribea Barnes, Caroline Perkins, Marty Laubach, Brice Seifert, Asad Salem, Karen McComas, Loukia Dixon, Jordan Wooldridge, Amy Lorenz, Vanessa Keadle, Wayne Elmore, Mary Beth Reynolds, Larry Sheret

Ex-Officio Members Present: Chris Swindell, Doug Nichols

Members Absent: Paula Lucas, Nicki LoCascio, Sherri Smith, Rex McClure

Ex-Officio Members Absent: None

Agenda Items

1. **Introductions:** Mary Beth Reynolds called the meeting to order. Introductions were waived because all present knew one another.
2. **Approval of Minutes:** Minutes of the January 31, 2014 meeting were tentatively approved, with the possibility of a later correction from Sherri Smith.
3. **Update on Assessment Reporting Portal and Reporting Expectations:** Doug Nichols reported that most elements of the assessment portal are ready to allow completion of assessment updates for academic year 2013 – 2014. Two things that remain to be done are allowing programs to finalize and print their reports (or convert them to PDF). He said that these functions should be in place shortly. Mary Beth noted that she had conducted training sessions in April and told committee members that the portal is now secure, with only the program chair or designated contact able to access each program. However, she said that Doug can connect multiple people to a single degree or certificate program to allow direct data reporting from key faculty members. Mary Beth explained that, when beginning an assessment update, there is a box to begin a new report. The person completing the report must first select the link for the correct year, e.g. 2013-2014. Next, the person is given a choice to either begin a new report or import the report from the previous year. Mary Beth said that, in most cases, the *import* button should be selected. This will import information from the first three steps of the previous year's report (connection of missions of university, college, and program), assessment plan (learning outcomes, courses in which assessments are embedded, assessments, and benchmarks), and rubrics. The program may edit anything from these steps if desired. Then, to complete the new report, the program must enter the current academic year's results, analyze these results, and plan actions based on these results or on a comparison of these results from those of previous years.

Mary Beth asked committee members for input regarding this process. Loukia Dixon said that the Communication Disorders program had moved away from having faculty responsible for program-level assessments submit paper rubric results. Now, each person who completes an assessment

must enter the results into pre-prepared excel sheets within a departmental SharePoint site. The program's assessment coordinators transfer the results to the University's Assessment portal. Nicki LoCascio asked how most programs handle program assessment. Mary Beth said that it was variable; some programs have departmental level committees for program assessment, but in others assessment is handled primarily by the chair or other designated faculty member. Loukia discussed the challenges of creating rubrics and then discovering that changes need to be made to the rubrics themselves. She said the process appears to be never-ending, but believes that is the purpose of assessment, to continuously improve what we do. Mary Beth agreed that continuous improvement includes updating rubrics and other assessment tools, as well as using data to improve student learning experiences.

Caroline Perkins questioned why program assessment reports are supposed to include data on majors exclusively. She believes that, for foreign languages, assessment should be done for all students enrolled in those courses. Mary Beth asked for further discussion about this, saying she understood why this might be a problem for programs that teach large numbers of non-majors, as it is important for them to assess the efficacy of their general education courses, which are part of their programs. Mary Beth reintroduced the concept of adding individual student data entry into our assessment portal. If this can be accomplished, it would allow reporting of student performance on program program-level assessments for all students who complete these assessments, bot majors and non-majors. If information regarding each student's major were available in the system, it would be fairly easy to separate reports for major and non-majors. This also would have the advantage of allowing programs like to RBA programs to harvest data for their students. Plus, programs like foreign language would be able to compare student performance in their 200- and 300-level courses with their final performance in their capstone experiences.

Some discussion ensued regarding assessment point 1 and assessment point 2 comparisons. Mary Beth said that the university has articulated outcomes that become progressively more challenging as students move through the curriculum. Sherri Smith reminded committee members that the expected outcomes at each assessment point are different, e.g. students might be expected to *explain* something at assessment point 1 and to *analyze* or *evaluate* it at assessment point 2. Therefore, the fact that a lower percentage of students met the criterion at assessment point 2 than at assessment point 1 did not mean that students were not progressing as they should. This led to a discussion where Brice Seifert said it was important to begin with the final outcome; what you want students to be able to do when they graduate and to determine what the significant *predictors* of that outcome were, i.e. what were the stepping stones that would lead them to the outcome. Larry Sheret said that any longitudinal analysis should compare assessment points over years, i.e. assessment point 1 should be compared across years, not to assessment point 2 within the same year. That said, Mary Beth noted that faculty must decide what is acceptable to them in terms of the percentage of students who meet their expectations at graduation, i.e. at assessment point 2. If they are not satisfied with student performance, they must determine how to improve it. To this end, as Brice suggested, identifying the correct early *predictors* of achieving the final outcomes becomes important. Mary Beth also discussed the importance of analyzing results for a single outcome across traits; if students perform relatively better on one trait than on another, that suggests that steps need to be taken to improve student learning in that aspect of the outcome.

Mary Beth reported to committee members that programs are in the process of mapping program outcomes to university outcomes, but she had not met with all programs yet, so this process will be completed during academic year 2014 – 2015.

4. **National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and Graduation Surveys:** Mary Beth reported that the response rate for NSSE to date is 24% (19% freshmen and 28% seniors), which is up from about 20% last year. She thanked Vanessa Keadle for her work in encouraging students to complete NSSE. She also reported that the response rate for graduation surveys to date is 28%, which is down from about 41% last year. Mary Beth said she would update committee members on results at the fall 2014 meeting.
5. **Syllabus Evaluations:** Mary Beth thanked the committee members for the syllabus evaluations. She said she would review them this summer, provide feedback to faculty and provide a further update to the committee in the fall.
6. **Assessment Day:**
 - **Senior Assessment/CLA+:** A lengthy discussion ensued about the challenges Marshall has in securing large enough and representative samples for the specific type of direct assessment of student learning required for reporting on the Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA). Mary Beth noted that, for VSA reporting purposes, we must use an assessment it has approved, one of which is the CLA+. Embedding a freshman matriculation assessment (either the CLA+ or the problem-based tests that Marshall faculty have developed) has led to a more representative sample of Marshall freshman for the CLA+, but we continue to struggle at the senior level. Mary Beth asked committee members for thoughts about options such as using the VSA approved AAC&U's Critical Thinking and Written Communication Value Rubrics to assess capstone projects, and whether or not these might be uploaded to GEAR so that Marshall's summer assessment team could pull a random sample to assess. Caroline Perkins pointed out the difficulty of having students in foreign languages upload large portfolio files (which are their capstones) to GEAR. She noted that anyone assessing the projects also would have to fluently speak the language in which the projects are completed. Wayne Elmore said that some capstones in the College of Science have resulted in patents and it might be problematic for students to upload to a site where others have access to the work. Although there was sentiment that the AAC&U's Critical Thinking and Written Communication Value Rubrics could be adapted to assess most capstone projects, Nicki LoCascio said she was concerned about placing still more assessment work on Marshall's faculty. Sherri Smith pointed out that the faculty on the summer assessment team receive stipends for this work, but Mary Beth said that, at some point, we would need to do a cost-analysis comparing cost of administering something like the CLA+, which includes scoring every assessment completed, and in-house costs, where only a sample of completed assessments are scored. There also was discussion about working with departments and/or individual capstone instructors to make taking the CLA+ or other senior assessment part of the capstone requirements. If this is done, it would have to be introduced gradually, i.e. volunteer faculty would have to be sought initially. Sherri also suggested conducting a study to see how other universities are reporting student learning outcomes on the VSA.
 - **Assessment Day Degree Program Survey Report – Undergraduate:** Mary Beth noted that we received in excess of 900 responses to the Degree Program Survey and presented a short report on the survey's results. She said she will soon provide degree-program specific results to

respective units. Survey items were mapped to Marshall's learning outcomes and students were asked to opine as to how their core curriculum and degree program courses helped them to meet these outcomes. Students reported the highest achievement in integrative, metacognitive, inquiry-based, civic and ethical, and creative thinking and in information literacy. Although students had the lowest ratings for broadening appreciation of the arts and learning to use mathematics in everyday life, Mary Beth noted that results from NSSE showed that Marshall had a particular strength as compared to its peer institutions in the engagement indicator of quantitative reasoning. She will analyze the specific NSSE items that resulted in this finding and consider adjusting the wording of the item on the graduation survey accordingly. As have our graduation surveys, the degree program survey showed that students were more satisfied with the quality of teaching at Marshall than they were with the quality of advising, student support services, and classroom and laboratory facilities.

- **Assessment Day Degree Program Survey Report – Graduate:** No report given.
- **Assessment Day Student Service Office Survey Report:** Of the surveys available to all students, the advising survey had the largest number of respondents. Mary Beth said that there is an advising retreat scheduled for June 10 and that advising would likely become a focused area for improvement in academic year 2014 – 2015.
- **Assessment Day Senior Interviews:** No report given.

7. **Advising Retreat – June 10:** Please see notes in item above.
8. **University Summer Assessment – May 19 – June 9:** Please see brief discussion in Assessment Day Senior Assessment/CLA+ item.
9. **Problem-Based Learning Scenario Workgroup – May 27 – June 13:** No report given.
10. **AAC&U High-Impact Practice Workshop – June 17 – 20:** No report given.
11. **HLC Assurance Argument Workgroups – June 9 – August 8:** No report given.
12. **BOG Program Review Recommendations – 12 programs recommended to continue at current level (one also with corrective action) and one to continue at a reduced level of activity while faculty study the feasibility of its continuing.:** This was an agenda item, but no further report was given.
13. **Program Review Plans for academic year 2014 – 2015: 23 programs to be reviewed:** No explicit report given.
14. **West Virginia Assessment Council Update:** No report given.
15. **Additional Business:** Vanessa Keadle reported that she is working with student organizations to map outcomes of their activities to Marshall's outcomes and domains. In fall 2014, student organizations that receive funding from the Student Government Association will be required to complete a quick question and answer survey specifying the nature of their event, attendance, event activity description. They will send this information to Vanessa, who will map to the appropriate university outcomes.

Mary Beth asked committee members to share with their units that program assessment should be done in such a way that it makes a positive impact on student learning in the program. She said it was not the intention of Marshall's HLC Quality Initiative to force total uniformity on the assessment process. However, it was the intention to identify those measures, e.g. developing analytic rubrics, which would allow programs to more easily identify relative strengths and weaknesses, providing the opportunity for them to improve student learning in their programs. She thanked committee members for sharing ideas such as the importance of conducting longitudinal analyses by comparing like assessment points (e.g. point 1) across multiple years, having programs that provide a lot of service to the university assess non-majors as well as majors for the purposes of improving course delivery for all students. Finally, she reiterated that, if we get to point where we have option of entering student results in same way as grades are entered and have BANNER information, we will have richer assessment information in the aggregate.

The meeting was adjourned around 1:40 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mary Beth Reynolds

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