

University Assessment Committee Meeting

Monday, December 15, 2014; 12:00 – 2:00 PM
MSC John Spotts Room

Minutes

Members Present: John Yaun, Maribea Barnes, Edna Meisel, Kim DeTardo-Bora, Asad Salem, Caroline Perkins, Loukia Dixon, Larry Sheret, Marty Laubach, Susan Imes, Carla Lapelle, April Fugett-Fuller, Andrew Gooding, Lori Howard, Nicki LoCascio, Sherri Stepp, Vanessa Keadle, Tim Melvin, Doug Nichols, Sherri Smith, Mary Beth Reynolds

Members Absent: Paula Lucas, Rex McClure, Karen McComas, Student Representative (TBD)

Agenda Items

1. **Introductions:** Following lunch, the meeting started with introductions. Welcomes were extended to new members Edna Meisel (College of Education and Professional Development) Susan Imes (College of Health Professions), Carla Lapelle (Student Affairs), and Lori Howard (Graduate Council). The committee extended best wishes to Vanessa Keadle, who is leaving Marshall to join the Student Affairs Division of the Higher Education Policy Commission.
2. **Announcement:** Mary Beth Reynolds announced that Marshall's Assessment website was selected by the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA) as its featured website for the month of November. She emphasized that there is much and varied information on this website. She encouraged committee members to make faculty and staff in their constituencies aware of the information on the site and to recommend that they visit it www.marshall.edu.
3. **Approval of Minutes:** Minutes of the October 15, 2014 meeting were unanimously approved as submitted.
4. **Quick Updates**
 - **HLC Assurance Argument Update:** Dr. David Hatfield is continuing to write this argument. Mary Beth will let everyone know when the first draft is complete.
 - **Spring 2014 Syllabus Review Distribution Feedback:** Mary Beth reported that syllabus feedback has been sent to all faculty whose syllabi were reviewed last spring. This was done in two steps. First, a general email was sent highlighting required syllabus information most frequently not included (assessment grid and link to University policies). This was followed by individual feedback in the form of the syllabus review check sheet completed by the Assessment Committee reviewer (name of Assessment Committee reviewer was removed before sending).
 - **NSSE and Graduation Survey Spring Schedule:** National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) will launch on February 24. Mary Beth asked that everyone remind freshmen and seniors to complete NSSE. She said that Marshall's NSSE results continue to show that our students rate

us highly in the area of *academic challenge*. Our ratings have improved since the inception of the new core curriculum. The last NSSE email reminder will be sent to students on April 13. Spring undergraduate graduation surveys will launch around the beginning of March, with the last reminder occurring at the end of April. On Assessment Day (April 14) we will have prize drawings, which will include prizes for NSSE completers, graduation survey completers, and completers of other assessment activities.

5. Items for more in-depth discussion

- **Annual Assessment Report Assignments:** In response to a proposal from Mary Beth, the Graduate Council decided to allow the University Assessment Committee to review all of the annual assessment reports, both graduate and undergraduate. The reason Mary Beth made this proposal was that, beginning in academic year 2015-2016 she would like the University Assessment Committee to review these reports during the fall semester. Since the Graduate Council also has the responsibility of reviewing program reviews in the fall of each academic year, it would be burdensome for them simultaneously to review annual assessment reports. To keep the workload of the University Assessment Committee manageable, Mary Beth proposed that we have only one committee reader per report with Mary Beth serving as each report's second reader. She made a request that committee members emphasize to their constituents the importance of entering assessment results into the assessment portal as soon as these results have been collected. If necessary, analysis and planned actions can come later.

For this year, we set a March 4 deadline for committee members to complete their reviews of annual assessment reports. Mary Beth distributed review assignments and directions for accessing the reports in SharePoint. She also reviewed these directions, the elements of the reports, and the traits and levels of the assessment rubric. Loukia Dixon said that, when reviewing assessment reports, she struggles with assignment of level 2 or level 3 for the "feedback loop" trait. Mary Beth said that she has, on the final ratings for the feedback loop, settled on a score of 2.5 when the program, in her judgment, fulfilled one element of level three, but not both. She agreed that perhaps we need to have more discussion about this and clarify this particular element of the rubric. Mary Beth also said that, in her opinion, it's acceptable when programs sat that they don't have enough information to determine a definitive action plan. Reviewers should look for a cogent analysis of results.

Larry Sheret asked for a definition of "complementary." Mary Beth said that "complementary" referred to using different types of assessment measures that complement one another. Loukia noted that one problem with the current assessment portal is that it is not possible to combine results from direct and indirect measures in the results reporting section. Mary Beth agreed with this and suggested that programs use the free text box in step 6 to report the results of any indirect data collected, which can be considered complementary to direct measures. Sherri Smith suggested that verbiage for that text box be included to direct report writers to this possibility.

Susan Imes asked for clarification about the benchmark terms. Mary Beth clarified that benchmarks for assessment points are *milestone* (assessment point 1) and *capstone* (assessment point 2) for undergraduate programs and *capstone* (assessment point 1) and *advanced* (assessment point 2) for graduate programs. Mary Beth told committee members

that the graduate programs in the College of Education and Professional Development did not use the assessment portal when writing assessment reports because NCATE reporting requires more information. Their reports, which as mini-program reviews, are longer than most of Marshall's annual assessment reports and will be available by February 1. When they are submitted, Mary Beth will add them to the Assessment SharePoint site and will advise reviewers which sections to review.

- **Syllabus Review for spring 2015:** Mary Beth will make syllabus review assignments in March 2015. She noted that we would not review syllabi for faculty whose syllabi addressed all elements of the University's Syllabus policy during the last review, so there should be fewer syllabi to review this year than last.
- **General Education Assessment Reports and Next Steps:** Mary Beth explained that the assessment team, consisting of nine Marshall faculty members, completed two types of general education assessment during the summer of 2014. The first was to compare results of baseline assessments completed by incoming freshmen during Week of Welcome (fall 2013) with final exams of the same students at the conclusion of First Year Seminar (fall 2013 and spring 2014) and with senior assessments completed by graduating seniors during the spring semester of 2014. For these assessments students were given a specific scenario (same from baseline and senior and similar for FYS final exam) and were asked to examine evidence to solve the problem presented in the scenario. Using that evidence, they wrote a memo with a recommendation for the problem's solution. Samples were pulled for assessment; all were de-identified and scored by two independent raters using the same rubric. Results, which are available on the assessment website, showed significant improvement in student performance between freshman and senior year, with significant improvements also seen for some traits between baseline and FYS assessments. Before engaging in this assessment, members of the assessment team spent a day norming the rubric and made some changes to the rubric before beginning the assessment process. After the assessment process, they made further changes to the rubric, which will be implemented during the summer 2015 general education assessment process.

Mary Laubach, who was a member of the summer assessment team, described the second type of general education assessment, which was to assess student work uploaded to the University's General Education Assessment Repository (GEAR). Unlike the baseline/FYS/senior assessment where all students wrote memos with recommendations for solving problem-based scenarios (after examining evidence concerning the problems), student work uploaded to GEAR for assessment differed depending upon the course in which they were enrolled. These uploads represent student work completed in courses and are meant to focus on one or more of Marshall's learning outcomes. To be clear, each student artifact need address a minimum of one element (trait) of a Marshall outcome, but may address more and may also address more than one outcome. The rubrics used to assess these artifacts are different than the ones used to assess the baseline/FYS/senior assessments in that the performance levels of the GEAR rubrics were written to be qualitatively different. In other words, performance level descriptions for each outcome trait were written as outcome statements using verbs from Bloom's Taxonomy, articulating the expected level of performance at four levels: *introductory* (expected level of performance for freshmen), *milestone* (expected level of performance for sophomores/juniors), *capstone* (expected level of performance for graduating seniors), and *advanced* (expected level of performance at the graduate level or for exceptional undergraduates). Therefore, it is

conceivable that instructors of freshmen and sophomores might write assignments where students would be expected to perform at *milestone* or even *introductory* (rather than at *capstone* or *advanced*) levels. However, assessors were provided only with information about which outcomes and traits the artifacts addressed, not the level of performance expected. This often caused difficulty with assessment because it was possible for artifacts to address the *capstone* level without providing evidence of having mastered the earlier levels and some assessors found this to be problematic. Marty also noted that it's one thing to create rubrics in the abstract, but that once the rubrics are used to assess student work, we often find changes that need to be made (as the summer assessors did with the baseline/FYS/senior rubrics).

Another issue with the assessment rubrics used for GEAR artifacts was that some of them refer heavily to process rather than to product. Marty noted that it was nearly impossible for assessors to verify the process used when they had only a product to assess. For this reason, the summer assessment team recommended that, for those rubrics identified as being process oriented, students include papers explaining the process they used to arrive at the final products in their GEAR uploads. Doug Nichols explained that this could be accomplished by asking students to upload two files, a process file and a product file.

The summer assessment team further recommended that instructors begin tagging both the outcome/s and trait/s the assignments address and the level of performance to which the assignment is written. GEAR also has been modified so that, when creating assignments, instructors must upload the assignment instructions to GEAR. Mary Beth and Doug will complete recommended changes to GEAR, which will be implemented for spring 2015 uploads.

Other discussion included restricting the number of outcomes and traits to which instructors of students could tag an individual assignment, or perhaps creating a mechanism within GEAR to rank order tags from most to least important. Mary Beth is working on creating companion rubrics to our official rubrics. These companion rubrics would expand the *milestone* and *capstone* performance levels. She will update the Assessment Committee regarding progress on this project at its next meeting.

- **Assessment Day**
 - **Senior Assessment Plans:** Mary Beth distributed the spring senior assessment schedule, which includes the times and locations for these assessments. She explained that she has contacted chairs asking that capstone instructors consider either requiring or strongly encouraging their students to complete the senior assessment. Mary Beth will administer (or find someone to administer) these assessments, so capstone instructors will not need to do so; they are simply being asked to consider making completion of senior assessments a capstone course requirement. Some instructors have already responded favorably and Mary Beth has specific times set aside for a few of these. She will continue to follow-up in the spring and asked Assessment Committee members to spread the word and encourage capstone instructors in their colleges to consider encouraging students to participate. She noted that students must have specific qualifications (have completed most of their coursework at Marshall and have taken the ACT or SAT) to participate in the actual Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA+), so we will combine this with our Marshall paper and pencil senior assessments.

- **Prize Drawings:** All students who complete spring assessment related activities (senior assessments [including CLA+], senior interviews [coordinated by the Office of Career Services], graduation surveys, all other surveys related to Assessment Day, college or departmental assessment activities related to Assessment Day, *NSSE*, etc. will be entered into Assessment Day prize drawings. These will likely be conducted on April 14. More information will be forthcoming during the spring semester.
- **AAC&U High-Impact Practice Project Update:** April Fugett-Fuller gave an update on our AAC&U High Impact Practice Project. She reported that we have three FYS and two partner instructors who have agreed to participate. We are currently recruiting a third partner. These pairings will result in three student cohorts who will experience the same two classes their first semester at Marshall. During this experience, students in each cohort will work through a singular problem or theme. Instructor collaboration will begin during the spring semester of 2015, with the course pairing commencing in the fall of 2015.
- **Graduation Surveys at Graduate Level:** Plans are to develop and launch graduation surveys at the graduate level. We will have more information on this project later.

6. General Discussion

- **Updates from Units:** Larry Sheret (University Libraries) reminded everyone that the library has two information literacy assessments; one for lower division and the other for upper division courses. He would like FYS students to complete this assessment to establish a baseline. He noted that it is valuable to have these done by freshmen and seniors to measure growth over time. Larry emphasized that this assessment would serve as a direct assessment that is complementary to other information literacy assessments used by degree programs. He asked that members of the committee spread the word that instructors should contact him if they'd like their students to complete the library's information literacy assessment. He offered his services (or those of another librarian) to work with students in the classroom to complete the assessment. He also noted that instructors could have students complete the assessment as a homework assignment. Mary Beth noted that the library's assessment is available through BlackBoard, so would be easy for instructors using BlackBoard to incorporate into their courses.
- **Additional Business:** None.

The meeting was adjourned around 2:00 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mary Beth Reynolds

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