

University Assessment Committee Meeting
Monday, December 14, 2015: 12:00 – 2:00 PM
John Spotts Room

Minutes

Members Present: Sherri Stepp, Paula Lucas, Karen McComas, Edna Meisel, Andy Hermansdorfer, Britt Frye, Caroline Perkins, Loukia Dixon, Maribea Barnes, Asad Salem, Andrew Gooding, Larry Sheret, Marty Laubach, Alex O'Donnell, Lori Howard, Nicki LoCascio, Doug Nichols, Tim Melvin, Kim DeTardo-Bora, Mary Beth Reynolds

Members Absent: Mindy Allenger, Sherri Smith, Susan Imes

Agenda Items

1. The meeting began with lunch.
2. **Introductions:** Members introduced themselves, with a special welcome to new member Andy Hermansdorfer.
3. **Minutes** from the September 28, 2015 meeting were approved unanimously.
4. **Quick Updates**
 - **Higher Learning Commission Site Visit** (October 12 and 13): Mary Beth announced that Marshall has not received its official response from the HLC yet, but HLC's Institutional Actions Council is meeting today (December 14), so our official response should be forthcoming. She expressed appreciation to everyone for attending and sharing assessment stories at the various sessions during the site visit.
 - **Blackboard Outcomes:** Mary Beth explained that the University's license for Blackboard has expanded to include Analytics for Learn (A4L), Outcomes, and Blackboard Learn. She expressed appreciation to those who had attended some preliminary sessions regarding A4L and Blackboard Learn and said we would begin working with Blackboard representatives to test the Outcomes Module during the spring semester. Regarding Outcomes, our first order of business will be to transition our general education assessment process from GEAR to Outcomes. Doug Nichols said that this move will benefit the university by removing a hurdle for faculty and student, i.e. now work students submit to the Blackboard Learn System will be have to be resubmitted to GEAR; it can simply be seamlessly imported from Blackboard Learn to Blackboard Outcomes. Mary Beth said she would keep the committee updated on progress.
 - **Assessment Day:** Mary Beth reminded committee members that, although the University no longer has an official "Assessment Day" on the academic calendar, we would continue to conduct strategic assessments from February – April, with a day in April set aside for prize drawings. Departmental assessment activities will continue to be included. Prizes will be scaled back this year due to budget cuts.
 - **Co-Curricular Assessment** (Britt Frye and Andy Hermansdorfer): Andy updated members regarding assessment in Student Affairs. He said that this is the second year that the division has implemented the learning outcomes from Council for the Advancement of Student Standards in Higher Education. He said that, during the first year of implementation, Student Affairs focused on assessing its programs. This academic year their focus is on assessing learning

outcomes and matching these outcomes to program activities. The Division of Student Affairs also has established an assessment team whose goal is to implement a cohesive, coordinated assessment within Student Affairs. It wants to provide guidance in assessment planning and refine its core set of student learning outcomes. Its vision is to have plans implemented, reported, and results considered for changes. All divisions have three to five learning outcomes and each will have a mid-year check-up in January. Britt said that Housing and Residence Life (H&RL) also uses the standards from the Council for the Advancement of Student Standards in Higher Education, with its curriculum model as the basis for its assessment. This has resulted in H&RL aligning its curriculum with the association's standards. Britt talked about H&RL's training for resident advisors and academic mentors. It is currently evaluating student learning through employment, i.e. it would like to study the relationship between student employment and student learning. Britt noted that academic mentors do not give academic advice, but help students to navigate online resources, learn how to talk to professors, etc. H&RL operates a Learning Center, which is a study space staffed by academic mentors. Academic mentors also help to organize study groups and conduct study strategy and other academic-based programs. Resident advisors develop and conduct programming around the curriculum, but also have administrative responsibilities.

5. Specific Discussion Items

- **Annual Assessment Report Review:** The committee discussed possible changes to the rubric and assessment reporting template. Mary Beth suggested that there needs to be a place in the template that discusses what programs' planned actions were from the previous year with a box where each program can provide an update regarding progress on these planned actions. She also suggested that the template should provide some scaffolding for mission statements to show clearer alignments with the program's learning outcomes. Asad Salem suggested adding program objectives as a link between the program's mission and its learning outcomes. His rationale was the program objectives (which the program prepares students to be able to do three to five years after graduation), would be more precise (and more quickly achievable) than the program's mission. Alignment between program objectives and learning outcomes also would be more forthright than alignment between the program's mission and its learning outcomes. Larry Sheret talked about a different meaning of program objectives. According to his usage, an objective can be something a program has targeted to improve (i.e. its planned actions to meet specified benchmarks). After discussion, the committee decided that, although program objectives (in the sense that Asad had described them) would be useful for many programs, they would be one more step that would require additional time and effort to develop and would not be applicable to programs whose students are not being prepared for one specific career.

Regarding changes to the assessment reporting template, Mary Beth said Doug will import the mission statements for colleges and put those in for programs. He will make the current optional summary box a required box where, minimally, programs will summarize their planned actions for the next year. Then, Doug will import this box into the next year's report. After some discussion, the committee decided to bring this import into step 2 (after mission) and add a box where programs will report on progress made on last year's planned actions. Due to time constraints, Mary Beth said we will discuss the rubric in greater detail at our January meeting. She asked that people send suggestions for changes before then. Mary Beth also pointed out recommendations that Tim Melvin and Doug have worked on regarding adding specific

questions that might help people to think about important elements of their assessment processes.

- **CLA+/Baseline Assessment** (spring 2016): Mary Beth asked committee members to encourage capstone instructors to ask their seniors to sign up for senior assessments during the upcoming spring semester.
- **Marshall's Intercultural Thinking Outcome:** Marty Laubach, chair of the Intercultural Thinking Outcome Committee, has assembled a committee that will begin working on possible revisions to the outcome and rubric during the spring semester. He posed three questions to Assessment Committee members. He first discussed the issue of terminology having different meanings for different disciplines. His committee will discuss how best to address this issue with the outcome/rubric. Second, he discussed the issue with rubrics in terms of whether the level descriptions should be categorical (i.e. follow Bloom's Taxonomy) or continuous (i.e. select outcome to be achieved and describe how well students perform [which might include gradually increasing levels of task complexity facilitated by the professor]). Marty's third issue was a question about how we reconcile program assessment with only assessment of student work within a program. He (and others) argued that when a program recognizes that students do not perform to standards and does not complete the program, this outcome does not suggest that the program is not successful, but rather the opposite. Finally, Marty said that he would like to use course assignments that have been developed by faculty teaching Multicultural and International courses and develop the Intercultural outcome and rubric from those assignments. Karen McComas countered that, in her experience, most faculty who attend faculty development in the Center for Teaching and Learning do not immediately write assignments to the language of the outcomes, but rather to their short names (i.e. *Intercultural Thinking* rather than to "*Students will evaluate generalizations about cultural groups, etc.*" She suggested that perhaps we need to approach the revision of outcome from two directions, both reviewing assignments and determining whether or not these assignments require students to demonstrate the outcomes we collectively deem to be important.
- **Core Curriculum Review:** Mary Beth reminded committee members that the university will review the core curriculum in spring. Assessment Committee members will be asked to review this report.

6. Discussion Items for January meeting

- **High Impact Practice Project Preliminary Results:** Not addressed
- **Syllabus Assessment Assignments:** Mary Beth promised a summary of last year's syllabus evaluation results at the January meeting along with a spring semester syllabus evaluation strategy.
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7. Additional Business: None.

Meeting was adjourned at 2:00.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mary Beth Reynolds