

Assessment Committee Meeting Minutes
5 October 2004

Present: Rose Bundy, Anne Dueweke, Gary Gregg, Zaide Pixley, Karen Selby, Paul Sotherland

We continued going over Eric Nordmoe's end of year report for the 2003-04 academic year (this was started at the first meeting).

Area of Study goals – Eric received *some* replies from departments, but not a lot. Paul and Eric will see if there is enough information to work with, and if so, they will write up a report.

EPC's charge from the provost regarding general education – We discussed whether the discussion of AOS goals is a moot point given that EPC has been charged with the review (and redesign?) of general education. We agreed that any revision of the general education curriculum should be based on research.

We discussed a couple of ways in which we might assess general education this year. One way is to attach a (one page?) questionnaire to course evaluations with a bubble sheet that can be "Scantroned" asking about learning outcomes. Ideally we would acquire a mass of data over time to assess courses in the aggregate and map out where in the curriculum students acquire various skills and knowledge. The undergraduate school at Duke has done something like this (Earlham is also doing a similar "exposure" study, i.e., where in the curriculum are students exposed to different skills and areas of knowledge). Paul will email the dean of the undergraduate college at Duke to request a copy of their instrument.

We also discussed studying course syllabi for learning goals, skills taught, content covered, etc.

Paul said he would talk with Kathy Smith, chair of EPC, to find out the exact nature of the committee's charge and to suggest that curriculum redesign wait for more assessment data.

External reviews – Three are scheduled for this year: Biology, Health Sciences, and Psychology.

Paul will look into getting student(s) on the committee.

Anne gave a description of the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) instrument.

We adjourned a little after 5:00pm.

Assessment Committee Minutes
Oct. 12, 2004

In attendance, alphabetically: Rose Bundy, Anne Dueweke, Gary Gregg, Karen Selby, Paul Sotherland (chair)

Called to order at 4:10 pm.

1. Committee discussed the response of the Educational Policies Committee to Paul's inquiry about the notion of revisiting the structure of requirements at the college.
2. Briefly discussed the creation of forced-choice assessment instruments for the QR, Cultures, and CR requirements.
3. Continued going through the Grid of tasks that Eric Nordmoe had compiled at the end of the last academic year.

Jan Tobochnik's proposals (to change the senior exam so that students cannot fail; eliminate the portfolio requirement; re-evaluation the SIP) will be left to the Senior Year Committee. In addition, the portfolio review is being handled by EPC

QR assessment: Noted that Eric had been working on a pre- and post-course assessment instrument. Questions arose. on one hand is North Central satisfied with students' self reports of attainment, etc.; on the other, why should QR be treated differently from the other requirements?

The possibility of enabling students to place out of QR was also discussed. The potential of the requirement then being seen as remedial was also discussed.

The committee will return to the three requirements next week.

Senior Focus Groups: Committee will discuss next week Bob Stauffer's report on the Senior Focus Groups, conducted in Spring 2004.

Sophomore Focus on Cultural Understanding will be left to EPC, as a policy issue.

4. HEDS and CRIP

Need to examine the bookending of the two surveys once more.

Timing of the administration of the HEDS survey. Various proposals, including the notion of giving seniors in winter term a "day of gracious living" if their survey return rate is 95% +. Anne will find out how soon the survey could be available.

5. Next week.

Return to CR, QR, and CE discussion, including examination of survey data we already have.

Discuss senior focus groups.

Adjourned at 4:50

**Assessment Committee Minutes
October 19, 2004**

P. Sotherland, Z. Pixley, A. Dueweke, K. Selby, R. Bundy, G. Gregg

(G. Gregg)

1. Paul welcomed members, and reported the discussion at the Department Chairs meeting about determining whether non-K courses meet K's General Education requirements. He also circulated his e-mail to Department Chairs with Prof. Latiolais' response (which he noted was the only one he had so far received), which committee members read and discussed.
2. The Committee then discussed the General Education requirements, focusing on whether they need to be "simplified," whether assessable goals can be defined for them, and how assessable goals might be reached. A good deal of this discussion centered on whether disciplinary "breadth" might be a sufficient goal.
 - Anne explained how a notion of "intellectual cross-training" might apply
 - Gary asked whether "habits of mind" can be identified for goals
 - Karen suggested majors be seen as providing "depth" and AOS requirements "breadth"
 - Zaide pointed out that to position K College for this century it needs to have a vision for General Education – which includes a rationale for the value of "breadth"
3. Anne discussed need and plans for conducting focus groups with seniors on the General Education requirements.

Assessment Committee Minutes
October 26, 2004

In attendance, alphabetically: Rose Bundy, Anne Dueweke, Gary Gregg, Zaide Pixley, Karen Selby, and Paul Sotherland (chair)

Called to order by Paul Sotherland. Suggested and the group agreed to put aside the issues of senior focus group data on campus climate and exploration of creative expression data. The International Laboratory committee asked the Assessment Committee to look at what the cultures credit requirement is actually accomplishing. Suggested using surveys of courses that meet and do not meet the cultures requirement and focus groups.

What year are you? 1 2 3 4 Did you complete a study abroad? Do you plan to do a study abroad?

We then looked at the goals of cultures credit, the goals of internationalization, and had a lengthy discussion about whether or not we needed to define culture.

Gary Gregg asked if the internationalization goal would be better met with a globalization course winter of Sophomore year? Or an Internet based pre-study abroad course.

Ann Dueweke volunteered to collect concrete ideas. Suggested that we think about the moderate, tolerant, open psychological inventory like that being done in ACE/FIPSE grant Lessons Learned in International Education.

Rose Bundy suggested that the worth of individual culture credit courses is hard to measure as students understanding of the impact of any given course may not kick in for a decade.

Adjourned.

Assessment Committee
Minutes of the 12/12/04 Meeting

Attending: Madeline Chu, Anne Dueweke, Gary Gregg, Eric Nordmoe, Zaide Pixley, Paul Sotherland, Bob Stauffer

1. AAC&U Conference Report (Madeline and Zaide)

- ☞ Zaide and Madeline reported on their attendance at the “Faculty-Friendly Assessment of General Education” workshop presented by Karen Schilling.
- ☞ A detailed summary of the workshop is appended to these minutes.
- ☞ In the context of a discussion of the value of such workshops and conferences, Paul and Anne commented that these meetings often confirm that we’re already doing a good job at assessment.
- ☞ Zaide concluded her portion of the report with a brief summary of the presentation given by Professor Fish.

2. Discussion of Doctorate Study (Paul and Anne)

- ☞ Paul and Anne led the committee through a discussion of preliminary results from the doctorate study. The questionnaire and a handout of exhibits displaying survey results were distributed.
 - Two preliminary conclusions from the data
 - I. The K-Plan helps students develop into independent, life-long learners.
 - Later discussion of this point raised concern about the conceptual difficulty in assessing the incremental effect of the K-Plan from a survey including only alums that have completed doctorates. There was agreement that asking similar questions about the K-Plan of alums who did not complete doctorates would provide important missing information.
 - II. Experiential components of the curriculum contribute to intellectual (as well as personal) development.
 - The return rate for the survey was 53 percent with a total of 430 responses: 100 from alums attending K before the K-Plan was established and 330 from post-K-Plan alums. The analysis focuses on the 330 post-K-plan alums.
- ☞ Gary and Zaide noted that conclusion I above should be softened somewhat in light of the methodology difficulties in establishing the unique contribution of the K-Plan from this study.
- ☞ After discussion of the results, Paul asked committee members to reflect on and respond to the data presented.

Meeting adjourned about 5:30pm.

REPORT TO ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE FROM AAC&U CONFERENCE 2004 (Pixley)
 PRE-CONFERENCE WORKSHOP – “FACULTY-FRIENDLY ASSESSMENT OF GENERAL
 EDUCATION” – Karen Schilling

GENERAL GUIDELINES

- ☞ Assessment: a mirror you hold up to students to see what they're learning.
- ☞ Accept imperfection of method.
- ☞ Start with faculty questions.
- ☞ Focus on what people care about
- ☞ Make optimal use of existing data.
- ☞ Understand assessment raises as many questions as it answers.
- ☞ Avoid “paralysis of analysis”
- ☞ Don't have too many goals. 7 ½ is about what people can't remember. Fewer goals, publicized, widely known, measured.
- ☞ See it as ongoing process. Embrace cumulative and incremental models.
- ☞ Build a history of use of data (e.g. FYSem library program, assessed once, need to be assessed again)
- ☞ All assessment does not have to be state of art.

USER FRIENDLY FOR FACULTY

- ☞ Identify manageable chunks that fit into busy lives
- ☞ Assessment speaks to a general faculty virtue: self-improvement.
- ☞ Assessment: think of it like scholarly research, incremental, builds on previous work, not just one big project.
- ☞ Use natural scholarly inclinations to do something that captures issue of the moment (analysis?)
- ☞ Assessment needs to reflect interests of faculty. Ask: What do faculty care about? What is important to measure? Don't dream up questions but empower conversations with students and faculty. What do you care about? Cultivate energies of faculty and students. Begin assessment at place where energy is.
- ☞ Reflect points of view: Faculty from different disciplines have dif perspectives on what makes up, say, critical thinking. Ask yourself, what would convince X that Y is working? Don't reduce assessment down to the bare minimum that everyone can agree upon. Put in different measures that different people will resonate with. Assessment has to reflect richness of curriculum and points of view. Build web of evidence based on portfolio of different points of view on a topic. That's the only way the evidence will be credible. Recognize the traditions that inform what different disciplines do. E.g. English departments will resonate with anecdotes and narrative; scientists need data.
- ☞ Consider asking faculty to do one project about something they care about (are curious about) and then share the results with colleagues—in addition to IR broad based assessment.
- ☞ Create empowerment: turn assessment of course goals over to faculty. Grades can't suffice as assessment because they don't reflect a larger shared understanding of what learning is..
- ☞ Bring all activities faculty has been doing for years under one umbrella. Do we know what assessment is being done? This not only gets better results but recognizes and rewards behavior.
- ☞ Assessment is never about faculty evaluation.
- ☞ Faculty cynicism about mission statements and goals may come from administrative turnover. Last year we did x, now it's all about y. When old missions are thrown out, work is wasted.
- ☞ *“Every system is perfectly designed to produce exactly the results you are getting.” – Peter Facione*
- ☞ *The most futile thing to do is to try to make sure what you do will matter before you do it. - Vaclav Havel*
- ☞ *We don't take enough time to listen to our students.” We assume we know their experiences and understand their perspective. – Freeman Hrabowski*

GENERAL EDUCATION

- ☞ Curriculum: an “accidental compromise between a dimly remembered past and an imperfect glimpse of the future.” Most curricula are irrational.
- ☞ If you want students to have a skill, then build learning that skill into the curriculum
- ☞ Good assessment of general education program captures many different views, because people will have different ideas of what needs to be measured and how it can be measured.
- ☞ Gen ed: brings together competing interest with a shared agenda in a cooperative relationship. If FYSEms focus on writing, needs to serve other units. Is it? How can we tell? If it isn't, why not? Do we have to teach everything over? Not cost effective.
- ☞ Use rubric everyone agrees upon to assess development of writing (or other shared skills and goals).

USING WHAT ALREADY EXISTS/BUILDING ASSESSMENT INTO THE SYSTEM

- ☞ Take advantage of all groups that are out there and functions—for example, log onto computer, have to answer question.
- ☞ Ask at orientation: Who are you? Why are you here? What should we know about you? Ask students about their expectations, give info to faculty (could be done by PLs, short).
- ☞ All Seminars: free write on question at beginning of hour, collect over time. The “one question” might be: At K, what do we mean when we say we offer a liberal arts education? What are the biggest needs on campus?
- ☞ Or, ask every senior one question, a different question each year. For example, when they walk off stage after having graduated (film made at Harvard—*Private Universe*)
- ☞ Exit interviews: each faculty member interviews one senior. Then they come together and discuss what they heard, someone takes notes and reports back, and formulate a set of questions for the next year and/or about issues on campus.
- ☞ Videotape senior [ora.?] presentations; evaluate skills by a rubric. Videotape science student poster sessions. Look at results. Decide what issues should engage curriculum conversations next year.
- ☞ External guests: when they come, ask them to look at curriculum and talk with students. Build up body of knowledge over a series of visits
- ☞ What departments already have information on performance of students?
- ☞ Tap into what's being done through other parts of campus (development, admissions, EA)
- ☞ About alumni: ask employers how they're doing, what they do well (one year out, five years out)

BUILDING THE CASE THAT ASSESSMENT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

- ☞ Focus groups and exit interviews are really helpful. Students want to do them especially when they see results.
- ☞ To get students to care, tell them about the last thing that changed as the result of assessment.
- ☞ What if all conversations about an aspect of education began with some data?
- ☞ As soon as you get a response, immediately say “thank you, we intend to use this” . . . while gratitude is still meaningful.
- ☞ We need to act on what the data tells us.
- ☞ Asking hard questions can have negative consequences, so administrative support for asking hard questions and getting bad news has to be in place.
- ☞ Use assessment to communicate to prospective students and parents about what students learn and can do at our school; to tell parents, students, faculty what we care about
- ☞ If an institution systematically disregards assessment, it won't be done. Demonstrate by our actions that assessment makes a difference

- ☞ *Optimum state: clear goals, widely disseminated and understood, backed up by reasonable structures, reinforced by assessment.*
- ☞ *“Getting the problem right” matters. – A Dean*