

University Assessment Steering Committee (UASC)

<http://www.wmich.edu/assessment/uasc.html>

Summary Notes #99

Monday, October 21, 2013

2:00-3:30 p.m.

Room 3150, Schneider Hall

Learner –Centered, Discovery- Driven, Globally engaged

Attending: Thomas Kent (CAS for Scott Slawinski), Dave Reinhold (ASUGS), Karen Stokes Chapo (AIA), Marilyn Kritzman (AAUP), Ewa Urban (CASES), Renee Schwartz (CAS), Andrew Kline (CEAS), Elizabeth Terrel (CFA), Sue Brodasky (OIT), Jason Glatz (UL), P.J. Majors (LHC for Anthony Helms), Anne Lundquist (DSA), Marcia Feters (CoEHD), Lori Brown (CoA), Dae Kim (CHHS), Kelly Ackerson (USC), Louann Bierlein Palmer (GSC) and Robert Dlouhy (IEC)

Absent: James Cousins (CAS), Chris Stamper (HCoB), Cari Robertson (SHC), Laura Ciccantell (ADV), and Betty Dennis (EUP)

1. **Chair remarks:**

- a. Welcome once again to all members and new members. The new member orientation was held just prior to today's meeting from 1:30 to 2 p.m. and all the new members were in attendance. We discussed the following:
 - Higher Learning Commission
 - Role of the UASC
 - Key Terms and Definitions
 - CARTs (Consultation and Review Teams)
 - TracDat Software
 - WMU Assessment in Action (Annual Conference and Committee)
 - UASC University Assessment Excellence Award
- b. It also mentioned that we are still seeking an interested person to serve as an associate chair starting next year (Jan. 2014) who will eventually replace the chair in the fall of 2014. Anyone interested should please contact Marilyn Kritzman, Dave Reinhold or Karen Stokes Chapo.

2. **Acceptance of agenda:** Dlouhy moved to accept the agenda and this was seconded by Ackerson, motion carried.

3. **Acceptance of UASC summary notes #98:** Glatz moved to accept the summary notes #98 and Dlouhy seconded, motion carried.

4. **Assessment Strategy for General Education:**

- a. The Higher Learning Commission pointed out in our last accreditation visit that we need to improve how we assess general education. Reinhold mentioned that Dr. Barbara Walvoord introduced a basic 2-step process to us during her visit last March that we could possibly adopt to assess our learning outcomes.
 - Step 1: Course level - instructors teaching the course in the distribution area are responsible for assessing the outcomes for that area.
 - Step 2: Assign an overarching committee to oversee the process at a 50,000 foot level to evaluate the data collected by the course instructors and make recommendations for improvements.
- b. Reinhold watched a webinar that discussed that the course level assessment can be combined with doing the grading.

- c. We discussed the structure of COGE (Committee to Oversee General Education). Every 7 years general education courses come to COGE for re-approval. Four or five years ago COGE was asked about including the question about assessment in the approval process and they decided that it was not under their purview.
- d. Assessment efforts for general education courses were attempted several times over the years. In 2005, rubrics were used to assess the 8 distribution areas as well as in the fall 2011 and the spring 2012. The rubrics used were created for the 2005 assessment and then revamped prior to the 2011-12 assessments. In 2008 there was also an assessment project for the baccalaureate writing courses. The data was collected but there was no evaluation of the findings.
- e. **Our challenge:** To determine what kind of structure we should use to evaluate the general education assessment data and move forward. There is a committee who is currently addressing the general education program/outcomes etc. but they need assistance from others in how to structure the program and determine how it will be assessed. They are going to create the learning outcomes and then they will determine the criteria. They will be soliciting feedback from many sources all along the way as they progress with this project and plan to be as transparent as possible.
- f. **Question:** How do we get the faculty together to discuss this and how often do we measure the outcomes? Michigan Tech. has 8 areas and assesses one per year.
- g. A related issue is that a lot of instructors are part-time and this presents a communication issue. With such a wide variety of instructors do we need a course coordinator to keep things on track? Turnover is greater with the part-time instructors so we need some kind of consistency. Reinhold talked to the part-time instructors during orientation this year about general education so this is a good start.
- h. It was suggested that since there was no standardization when we did the assessment previously, we don't know if the data is good or not?
- i. **Question:** A pilot for data gathering with a standardized rubric would be great, but what do we do with the data? This is the larger issue.
- j. It was mentioned that looking at how other institutions are doing this as potential models would be helpful. Grand Valley has a lot of participation from their faculty in assessment, for example. What about others?
- k. The AAC&U (American Association of College and Universities) Value Rubrics could be utilized. There are 16 rubrics designed by faculty from several institutions based around the basic skill sets that students need.
- l. **Question:** How does this body convince the faculty to make the necessary changes once data has been gathered and evaluated? COGE is the group who approves the courses, how can they not be the ones to enforce the changes necessary for improvement?
- m. It was noted that COGE relates the course syllabus and its outcomes to the criteria set by the Faculty Senate for approving a general education course but the learning objectives are not addressed in the approval process. And we're not sure if the learning objectives were approved by the Faculty Senate at any point. This disconnect is being addressed by the new committee that is looking at general education currently.
- n. **Suggestions from the group:**
 - The word on assessment of general education is not getting out to the groups who are "in the trenches" doing the work. Need better communication and outreach, to include general awareness of the need to do it and why.
 - Need to have a consistency across all courses so using a rubric was suggested. Training for using the rubric was also mentioned.
 - At Grand Valley, they sponsor a general education kick-off event in the fall. At the University of Kansas they started with one area to create a rubric to assess it and then did the same thing with all areas.
 - Use of a standardized rubric would be good but it was cautioned that the rubric needs to be specific enough to pull out good data.
 - We could do a pilot in the College of Arts and Sciences since most of the general education courses are taught in that college. If this were promoted and initiated through the dean's office in A & S, that would help the pilot to

- succeed.
- To get things started, Reinhold could meet with the department chairs from the College of Arts and Sciences and provide them with a presentation about what is needed and where we should go. If this is voluntary for the faculty, there is a potential that it won't get done. Faculty need to know that this is not a threat. Sharing the results of assessments once they become available is important and possibly having like instructors get together to talk about their experiences as well would be beneficial.
- What should the cycle of for doing the assessments look like?
It was proposed that we go with a 4 year cycle, something like this:
 - 2014-15: Measure proficiency 1 and distribution areas 1 and 5
 - 2015-16: Measure proficiency 2 and distribution areas 2 and 6
 - 2016-17: Measure proficiency 3 and distribution areas 3 and 7
 - 2017-18: Measure proficiency 4 and distribution areas 4 and 8
- It was noted that we should build time into the schedule for viewing the data and looking for trends. There should be a group who come together yearly who look at the data from the previous year and then report out. The report out should go to all participating general education faculty as well as others who may have an interest in the data. This group could be made up of members of the UASC or COGE. Data could be evaluated by the UASC and then they could send the data to COGE for enforcement. A former COGE member said that this sounded doable. Maybe the committee who evaluates the data could be composed of members of the UASC and the Undergraduate Studies Council (USC) as we need this representation from the Faculty Senate as well. However this is done, the data needs to be evaluated quickly and recommendations made and enforced in a timely fashion to allow time for changes to occur in teaching.
- It was mentioned that Reinhold has been charged with a lot and that it might serve the University better to spread the charge for general education assessment to another person as he has so much on his plate already.
- o. Reinhold has a plan to move forward. He will meet with the College of Arts and Sciences and give them our proposal. What we learn with A & S, we can adapt to the other colleges.

5. Suggestions for Sessions at WMU Assessment in Action Day 2014:

- a. Stokes Chapo mentioned that the Assessment in Action Committee is discussing the types of sessions to offer at WMU Assessment in Action Day 2014, (March 21, 2014).
- b. They have discussed having three tracks for people to attend focused on graduate student assessment, assessment for learning and student support units. What are suggestions from this group for possible sessions? We were dinged for graduate student assessment as an area for improvement by the HLC in their last visit so that is why we thought we'd add a specific track for sessions on that topic.
- c. **Suggestions from the group:** Look at where there is a need and where people are stuck. What are the stumbling blocks?
 - Session on assessing capstone projects to include the tools to accomplish this.
 - Address confusion and concerns regarding accreditation, program evaluation and assessment. Defining the difference between these and the overlap would be helpful.
 - Discussion on the language of assessment. How do you discuss it? What does it mean? How do you evaluate the assessments? A session to focus on the language used to discuss and write about assessment would be helpful.
 - How to link resources to assessment based on strategic priorities.

- Communication is needed. What should instructors be assessing, what is appropriate and how best to approach it.
- Assessing student learning outcomes outside of the classroom. A session with a few models and then a discussion afterward would be helpful. Ewa Urban from Career Services and also Arts and Sciences Advising have some neat examples that we could highlight.
- Help faculty understand how to close the loop and what to do to make improvements. Show tools that don't add to the workload built into courses and grading. Specific examples would be helpful.
- Looking at the changing demographics of students including international students, new generational learning styles, non-traditional students etc.
- What is difference between assessing and evaluating? This would be a helpful session.

6. **Graduate Student Assessment:**

a. We briefly discussed graduate student assessment. There is the track for this planned for WMU AIA Day 2014. We know of the issues from our previous discussion: How to write learning outcomes, tools to measure outcomes, how to close the loop. If you have other ideas, please share them with Stokes Chapo, Kritzman or Reinhold.

b. It was mentioned that the CAS (Council for the Advancement of Standards) are being used by the HESA program at WMU. They might want to share their work at AIA Day. They are currently doing a self-study.

7. **CARTs (Consultation and Review Team)s: Assignments and Strategy for the year:**

a. We will send out information about this prior to the next meeting. Please think about where we want to focus our efforts.

8. **Comments:** Reinhold hopes to be able to bring the NSSE (National Survey of Student Engagement) data to this group by the November meeting if he is able to meet with the President before then.

9. **MARK YOUR CALENDAR:**

a. The UASC Assessment Excellence Individual and Unit Award applications and nominations are due to be turned in on January 31, 2014. For more information go to: <http://www.wmich.edu/assessment/grants.html>

b. WMU Assessment in Action Day will take place on Friday, March 21, 2014.

10. **Adjournment**

Next Actions:

1. Reinhold will plan to set up a time to meet with the College of Arts and Sciences to provide them with our recommendations on next steps for general education assessment.
2. All, submit suggested nominations for associate chair to Marilyn Kritzman or Dave Reinhold.

Meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted: Stokes Chapo