

Voluntary System of Accountability Student Learning Outcomes Task Force Report

May 1, 2008

www.wmich.edu/poapa/VSA/index.html

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Task Force Charge

- Review the three instruments specified by the Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA) project to assess Western Michigan University student learning gains in critical thinking and writing skills.
- Solicit feedback and recommendations from the University community regarding the strengths and limitations of these instruments.
- Use the feedback and recommendations solicited to draft Task Force Report and Recommendation.

Overview of Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA)

- National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (NASULGC) and American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) developed VSA program to increase transparency and accountability in public higher education.
- NASULGC and AASCU secured funding from Lumina Foundation to set up several task forces.
- Task forces developed five-page, three-section, Web-based document titled Voluntary System of Accountability.
- There is currently no fee for institutions to adopt the VSA, but this may change.
- VSA will enable WMU to examine its strengths and weaknesses at both the institutional and programmatic level.
- Section I (family and student information) data are drawn from Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) and Common Data Set and are already available.
- Section II (student engagement) data are drawn from National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and are already available.
- **Section III (student learning outcomes):**
 - Data must be gathered using one of three assessment instruments: Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA), Measure of Academic Proficiency (MAPP), or Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP).
 - Because many institutions, including WMU, do not currently report on student learning outcomes using CLA, MAPP, or CAAP, full implementation of the VSA College Portrait template is not mandated until 2011.
 - VSA SLO Task Force will recommend the most appropriate of the three instruments.
 - Key modules are writing and critical thinking.
 - VSA SLO assessment data is broadly collected across the University and will be used as one measure to assess general education. This assessment is not intended to replace or fulfill program and departmental assessment policies.

Task Force Membership

Name	Title	Affiliation
Dr. Marcia Fetters, <i>chair</i>	Associate professor / Interim assistant chair	Teaching, Learning and Educational Studies / COGE
Ms. Sandra Glista	Master faculty specialist	Speech Pathology and Audiology / USC
Dr. Zoann Snyder	Associate professor	Sociology / UASC
Dr. Roberta Allen	Professor	Business Information Systems / Departmental assessment committee
Dr. Pamela Rooney	Professor	Business Information Systems / Departmental assessment committee
Dr. Vladimir Risukhin	Professor	Aviation / Departmental assessment committee
Mr. Fred Sitkins	Professor	Industrial and Manufacturing Engineering / Departmental assessment committee
Mr. Kevin Knutson	Director	Arts and Sciences / Academic advising
Mr. Benjamin Brown	Undergraduate student	Management
Ms. Heidi Egloff	Undergraduate student	Biochemistry / Chemistry
Mr. Thomas Swartz	Master faculty specialist	Industrial and Manufacturing Engineering / Writing program
Ms. Lisa Kruse	Doctoral student	Sociology
Dr. David Reinhold	Undergraduate studies director	Chemistry / Ex officio
Dr. Joyce Walker	Assistant professor	English / GEPAC

Relationship between VSA and Student Learning Outcomes

Key background information provided by VSA and WMU administration and used by the task force during deliberations focusing on the measurement and reporting of Student Learning Outcomes

VSA will link to institution-specific learning outcomes data within three months. The choice of what data to report may include reports on: assessments, employer satisfaction with graduates, licensing exam pass rates, etc.

The VSA pilot project is designed to measure student learning gains in critical thinking (including analytic reasoning) and written communication.

Institutions must choose between three instruments to measure these skills:

Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP)

Developed by ACT
<http://www.act.org/caap>

Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA)

Developed by Council for Aid to Education with the RAND Corporation
www.cae.org/content/pro_collegiate.htm

Measure of Academic Proficiency and Progress (MAPP)

Developed by Educational Testing Service
<http://www.ets.org/mapp>

Results will be reported in two ways: learning gains between freshman and senior years; and actual average test scores for freshmen and seniors.

Learning gains or value-added scores reflect the difference between the actual and expected scores of graduating and entering students, taking into account the academic ability of the students. The three testing organizations will use the same method to compute and characterize learning gains or value-added scores for VSA purposes: *Well Above Expected, Above Expected, At Expected, Below Expected, Well Below Expected*.

Actual average scores demonstrate whether the average score of the seniors is higher than the average score of the freshmen. Due to variation across the three instruments, results do not allow for direct comparisons between instruments.

For a period of four years, institutions do not need to publicly report test results. After that period, institutions will report and update the results at least once every three years.

VSA SLO assessment data is broadly collected across the University and will be used as one measure to assess general education. This assessment is not intended to replace or fulfill program and departmental assessment policies.

Overview of Task Force Procedures

The VSA SLO Task Force was convened on November 9, 2007. Dr. Eileen Evans, vice provost for institutional effectiveness, convened the first meeting, at which she presented the charge to the task force, then turned the meeting over to the chair and committee to develop an action plan to complete the work.

Members of the task force agreed on monthly meetings, with the knowledge that members would be charged with tasks between meetings and that most meetings would be used for reporting research findings and discussion of those findings. Minutes of these meetings can be found in the Appendix section of this document.

Members of the task force requested print copies of the CAAP and MAPP assessments and permission to view a Web version of the CLA assessment. These secured exams were distributed to the task force in January 2008, and returned to the testing publishers in February. Members of the task force were also invited to view Web seminars provided by VSA on each of the instruments. Beyond these sources of information, members of the task force viewed literature available from each of the assessment providers, examined research articles that cited the use of the instruments, and contacted peers at other institutions who have used or currently use the instruments.

These data sources were used to prepare a preliminary summary document describing the instruments and the task force recommendation. This document was shared with stakeholder groups across campus to provide them with information and gain their feedback prior to the task force's developing its final recommendation.

Summary of Three Instruments

A chart with greater detail for each of these instruments is provided in the Appendix of this document. The narrative that follows provides a brief overview of each of the instruments.

Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP)

Developed by ACT

www.act.org/caap

The CAAP instrument is used to measure critical thinking and writing skills by technical schools, community colleges and four-year colleges and universities. Institutions may elect to test all students or a sample of students. The exam is a paper/pencil exam with a significant part of the exam being a multiple-choice exam, with options for an essay portion. Time required to take the exam is 40 minutes per module. Scores reported are norm-referenced, scaled scores that compare students over time, between groups or across institutions. Availability of comparative data includes: national comparative data by class level and type of institution, and self-selected reference groups. Local data provided includes scaled scores and percentile ranks.

Institutional cost for CAAP is: \$12/student for each M/C test; \$12/student for Writing Essay; and a \$360 annual institutional participation fee.

Institutional Data Pool includes 385 institutions.

Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA)

Developed by Council for Aid to Education with the RAND Corporation

www.cae.org/content/pro_collegiate.htm

The CLA instrument is used to measure critical thinking and writing skills by community colleges and four-year colleges and universities. Institutions test a sample of students (in sample groups of 100). The exam is a Web-based exam that provides students with multiple sources of literature to use to form their written essays and performance tasks. Time required to take the exam is 90 minutes for the performance task and 75 minutes for two writing prompts. Scores provided are norm-referenced, scaled scores that compare students over time, between groups or across institutions. Availability of comparative data includes: national comparative data by class level and type of institution, and self-selected reference groups. Local data provided is in the form of scaled scores.

Institutional cost for CLA is: \$6,300 for cross-sectional sample of 100 freshmen and 100 senior students; and \$28,000 for a four-year longitudinal study.

Institutional Data Pool includes 331 institutions.

Measure of Academic Proficiency and Progress (MAPP)

Developed by Educational Testing Service

www.ets.org/mapp

The MAPP instrument is used to measure critical thinking and writing skills by technical schools, community colleges and four-year colleges and universities. Institutions may elect to test all students or a sample of students. The exam is a paper/pencil exam with a significant part of the exam being a multiple-choice exam, with options for an essay portion. Time required to take the exam is two hours for the standard form and 40 minutes for the abbreviated forms. Scores provided are criterion-referenced proficiency scores and norm-referenced scaled scores that compare students over time, between groups or across institutions. Local data provided consists of scaled scores and percentile ranks.

Institutional cost for MAPP is: \$15.50/student for Standard Form; \$13.50/student for Abbreviated Form; and \$5/student for optional essay.

Institutional Data Pool includes 337 institutions.

Summary of Task Force Findings

Members of the VSA SLO Task Force had access to background information and sample exams for all three instruments. Members also reviewed available information by peer institutions to determine which of the three instruments would provide the greatest usable information to the Western Michigan University community.

CAAP

Limitations/Concerns:

- The CAAP exam has two components: a multiple-choice instrument and an essay task. The task force has serious concerns whether this exam format can adequately measure critical thinking and writing skills.
- Strong focus on scientific reasoning, but lacks focus on analytical reasoning skills. Problem-solving skills assessment is limited or weak.
- Writing portion of multiple-choice exam focuses on grammar skills.
- Appears to be biased toward verbal persuasion and may not adequately assess other forms of writing.
- Does not appear to provide strong feedback for analytical writing skills or higher-order reasoning.
- Exam may be more appropriate for entry-level students but may not provide the information needed to determine value-added information for upper-level students.
- Implementation concerns for test fatigue and time commitment required by students.
- In February of 2003 the General Education Assessment Committee reviewed the CAAP test and recommended against selection of the CAAP test to assess writing skills. The committee found the material not challenging and unsuitable for university-level students.

Strengths:

- Does include an option for a writing sample.
- Forces the formation of an argument through organization of thoughts and ideas.

CLA

Limitations/Concerns:

- Implementation and resource (computer lab) requirements.
- Student selection process and sample size decisions could greatly impact results.
- User friendliness and test fatigue issues could be significant.

Strengths:

- Focuses on critical thinking and problem-solving skills.
- Strong variety of writing prompts including content, rhetorical writing.
- Appears to be a close match to WMU Baccalaureate writing criteria.
- Instrument is comprehensive and provides multiple levels of feedback on student writing and critical thinking skills.
- Peer institutions and research-intensive universities across the country that use an instrument to measure value-added components of critical thinking and writing skills are using more comprehensive instruments such as the CLA.

MAAP

Limitations/Concerns:

- Tests broad field knowledge and does not have strong focus on critical thinking skills.
- Multiple choice and essay are available—but it is not clear that VSA requires the essay component.
- May be most appropriate to measure skills for first two years but not provide adequate information about upper-level students.
- Criterion-referenced.
- Limited data provided to institution and may not provide enough data to determine value-added determination.

Strengths:

- Ease of implementation.
- Reduced chance of test fatigue.

Task Force Recommendation

The VSA SLO Task Force believes that the **Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA)** instrument will provide the most comprehensive and reliable measure of student writing and critical thinking skills for the WMU community to use for the VSA project. We have selected this instrument over the other two options based on our review of all three instruments, feedback from stakeholder groups, and conversations with peer institutions. This instrument was selected over CAAP and MAPP for the following reasons: CLA does not rely on multiple-choice items to assess writing skills; CLA provides students with the opportunity to use multiple literature sources in forming their written arguments; and CLA uses a comprehensive scaffolded approach to measure critical thinking skills through performance tasks.

Of the three instruments reviewed, the task force believes that this instrument has the potential to provide the University community with a higher level of accurate feedback on student learning outcomes that will meet the VSA requirements. Depending on implementation and if the University elects to participate in the longitudinal study option, the task force also believes that this instrument may provide the University community with one more piece of information that could be useful for making general education curriculum decisions in the future.

General Considerations and Concerns Across All Three Instruments Raised by Task Force and Stakeholder Groups (USC, UASC, Faculty Senate Executive Board, COGE)

The task force and the stakeholder groups had some general concerns across all three instruments. These concerns are focused primarily on issues of implementation, and around VSA in general. Several of these concerns were raised repeatedly across the groups so a summary of these comments is provided and not feedback from each group.

Concerns and questions raised in stakeholder group discussions have been grouped in the following categories: Input from Stakeholders; Implications for Current WMU initiatives, Policies and Programs; Implementation Issues; and Implications of Findings and Future Impact.

Input from Stakeholders

- Will GEPAC be involved in VSA? How?
- Will deans and chairs be involved in VSA? How?

Implications for Current WMU Initiatives, Policies and Programs

- What might be the overlap between WMU's internal faculty work on assessment versus the use of a tool such as the CLA, or any other VSA-endorsed instrument?
- What is the genuine meaningfulness of the outcomes of any test relative to changes to WMU curriculum? If an outside source suggested a need for resources directed toward writing (or critical thinking), might the administration be more likely to allocate more funds to that objective?
- Will this force us to start teaching to the test? Do we care what anyone else is doing as long as we are following our own guidelines?
- A small piece of assessment process. If our in-house measures indicate we are doing what is intended, then we are on track. One part of the puzzle.
- If we have a valid assessment system (home-grown) and our other metrics indicate students are developing good critical thinking and writing, and the instrument says our students aren't doing as well, then do we revisit the exam and our home-grown instruments?

Implementation Issues

- Test administration and implementation issues (timing, compensation for students, space and resource needs, etc.).
- Sample size.
- Student selection/recruitment to participate.

- Accommodations for students with disabilities.
- How/who scores the essays for each of these instruments?
- Marketing becomes crucial, so that we get the word out about what we do.
- How are you going to get students to take the exam seriously? Potentially high-stakes test for institution, but in no way a high-stakes test for students.

Implication of Findings and Future Impact

- Opportunities for longitudinal studies.
- Is there any data about how the CLA correlates with student performance on the GRE? (The person asking this question wondered if the CLA outcomes for seniors would be an indicator for performance on the GRE.)
- Concerns about how VSA SLO data that is publicly available on the Web will help or hurt our reputation when we are compared to other institutions. Implications for parents who are sending students to WMU.
- Publicized information won't reflect larger conversation on assessment and objectives unique to Western.

Appendix

Comparison of CAAP, CLA, and MAPP

Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP) Developed by ACT http://www.act.org/caap	Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) Developed by Council for Aid to Education with the RAND Corporation www.cae.org/content/pro_collegiate.htm	Measure of Academic Proficiency and Progress (MAPP) Developed by Educational Testing Service http://www.ets.org/mapp
<u>Intended Population</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Technical schools ➤ Community colleges ➤ Four-year colleges and universities <u>Student Standing</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Freshman ➤ Sophomore ➤ Upperclassman ➤ Graduating Senior 	<u>Intended Population</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Community colleges ➤ Four-year colleges and universities <u>Student Standing</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Freshman ➤ Sophomore ➤ Upperclassman ➤ Graduating Senior 	<u>Intended Population</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Technical schools ➤ Community colleges ➤ Four-year colleges and universities <u>Student Standing</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Freshman ➤ Sophomore ➤ Upperclassman ➤ Graduating Senior
<u>Testing Sample</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Sample of students ➤ All students 	<u>Testing Sample</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Sample of students 	<u>Testing Sample</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Sample of students ➤ All students
<u>Items and Forms</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Multiple choice ➤ Essay ➤ Multiple versions ➤ Paper-based format ➤ Optional inclusion of local items 	<u>Items and Forms</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Essay (make-an-argument prompts and break-an-argument prompts) ➤ Performance tasks ➤ Item banks ➤ Web-based format 	<u>Items and Forms</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Multiple choice ➤ Essay ➤ Multiple versions ➤ Paper-based format ➤ Web-based format ➤ Optional inclusion of local items

<p>Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP)</p> <p>Developed by ACT http://www.act.org/caap</p>	<p>Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA)</p> <p>Developed by Council for Aid to Education with the RAND Corporation www.cae.org/content/pro_collegiate.htm</p>	<p>Measure of Academic Proficiency and Progress (MAPP)</p> <p>Developed by Educational Testing Service http://www.ets.org/mapp</p>
<p><u>Pre- & Post-testing</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Different students (cross-sectional study) ➤ Same student (longitudinal study that can be linked to ACT or COMPASS scores to determine an institution's value-added to student learning) 	<p><u>Pre- & Post-testing</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Different students (cross-sectional study) ➤ Same student (longitudinal study that can be expressed as value-added scores. These scores are the difference between the actual mean CLA score at a school and the mean the participating students are predicted to earn given their average SAT or ACT scores. The CLA program computes the difference in value-added scores between freshmen and seniors at a school to create a measure of that institution's contribution to student learning) 	<p><u>Pre- & Post-testing</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Different students (cross-sectional study) ➤ Same student (longitudinal study)

<p>Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP)</p> <p>Developed by ACT http://www.act.org/caap</p>	<p>Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA)</p> <p>Developed by Council for Aid to Education with the RAND Corporation www.cae.org/content/pro_collegiate.htm</p>	<p>Measure of Academic Proficiency and Progress (MAPP)</p> <p>Developed by Educational Testing Service http://www.ets.org/mapp</p>
<p><u>Level of Results</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Individual Students ➤ Cohorts or subgroups ➤ Institutional aggregate 	<p><u>Level of Results</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Individual Students ➤ Cohorts or subgroups ➤ Institutional aggregate 	<p><u>Level of Results</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Individual Students ➤ Cohorts or subgroups ➤ Institutional aggregate
<p><u>Time Required</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 40 minutes per module 	<p><u>Time Required</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 90 minutes for Performance Task ➤ 75 minutes for two Writing Prompts 	<p><u>Time Required</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Two hours – Standard form ➤ 40 minutes – Abbreviated forms
<p><u>Scores Yielded</u></p> <p>Norm-referenced, scaled scores that compare students over time, between groups or across institutions.</p>	<p><u>Scores Yielded</u></p> <p>Norm-referenced, scaled scores that compare students over time, between groups or across institutions.</p>	<p><u>Scores Yielded</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Criterion-referenced proficiency scores ➤ Norm-referenced, scaled scores that compare students over time, between groups or across institutions.

<p>Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP)</p> <p>Developed by ACT http://www.act.org/caap</p>	<p>Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA)</p> <p>Developed by Council for Aid to Education with the RAND Corporation www.cae.org/content/pro_collegiate.htm</p>	<p>Measure of Academic Proficiency and Progress (MAPP)</p> <p>Developed by Educational Testing Service http://www.ets.org/mapp</p>
<p><u>Comparative Data Availability</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ National comparative data by class level and type of institution ➤ Self-selected reference groups available <p><u>Local Data</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Scaled scores ➤ Percentile ranks 	<p><u>Comparative Data Availability</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ National comparative data by class level and type of institution ➤ Self-selected reference groups available <p><u>Local Data</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Scaled scores 	<p><u>Comparative Data Availability</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ National comparative data by class level and type of institution ➤ Self-selected reference groups available <p><u>Local Data</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Scaled scores ➤ Percentile ranks
<p><u>Costs</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ \$12/student for each M/C test ➤ \$12/student for Writing Essay ➤ \$360 annual institutional participation fee 	<p><u>Costs</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ \$6,300 for cross-sectional sample of 100 freshmen and 100 senior students ➤ \$28,000 for four-year longitudinal study 	<p><u>Costs</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ \$15.50/student for Standard Form ➤ \$13.50/student for Abbreviated Form ➤ \$5/student for optional essay
<p><u>Additional services available</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Specialized score reports ➤ Research 	<p><u>Additional services available</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Specialized score reports ➤ Research ➤ Over-sampling 	<p><u>Additional services available</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Specialized score reports ➤ Research
<p><u>Institutional Data Pool</u> N= 385 institutions</p>	<p><u>Institutional Data Pool</u> N= 331 institutions</p>	<p><u>Institutional Data Pool</u> N= 337 institutions</p>

Meeting Summary Notes

Voluntary System of Accountability Student Learning Outcomes Task Force

Summary Note #1: November 9, 2007

Attending: Roberta Allen (Business Information Systems), Benjamin Brown (student), Eileen Evans (Institutional Effectiveness), Marcia Fetters, *chair* (Education), Sandra Glista (Speech Pathology and Audiology), Kevin Knutson (Arts and Sciences), Lisa Kruse (Sociology), Jonathan Pugh (Institutional Effectiveness), Vladimir Risukhin (Aviation), Pamela Rooney (Business Information Systems), Zoann Snyder (Sociology) **Absent:** Heidi Egloff (student), Fred Sitkins (Industrial and Manufacturing Engineering)

Fetters called the meeting to order at 10:05 A.M. and welcomed task force members.

1. **Overview** of VSA (Evans, Fetters):

- National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (NASULGC) and American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) developed VSA program to increase transparency and accountability in public higher education.
- NASULGC and AASCU secured funding from Lumina Foundation to set up several task forces.
- Task forces developed five-page, three-section, Web-based document titled Voluntary System of Accountability.
- There is currently no fee for institutions to adopt the VSA, but this may change.
- VSA will enable WMU to examine its strengths and weaknesses at both the institutional and programmatic level.
- Section I (family and student information) data are drawn from Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) and Common Data Set and are already available.
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 - Data must be gathered using one of three assessment instruments: Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA), Measure of Academic Proficiency (MAPP), or Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP).
 - Because many institutions, including WMU, do not currently report on student learning outcomes using CLA, MAPP, or CAAP, full implementation of the VSA College Portrait template is not mandated until 2011.
 - VSA SLO Task Force will recommend the most appropriate of the three instruments.
 - Key modules are writing and critical thinking.

2. **Charge** to the task force (Evans):

- Evans' role is to implement the instrument the task force deems most appropriate, not to favor any one instrument.
- Evans to gather available information on 2003 pilot study of CAAP test.
- Glista to seek test-specific feedback from colleague at Kalamazoo College.

3. **Timeline and Tasks:**

- In view of number of campus groups that will offer comment, task force will make its recommendation by February 1, 2008.
- Fetters to look into practicality of setting up centralized platform for task force (Vista or iWebfolio).
- Pugh to request review copies of each test.

4. **Next meeting:**

- Friday, December 7, 10 A.M. to 11:30 A.M., College of Arts and Sciences Conference Room, 2302 Friedmann Hall.

Fetters adjourned the meeting at 11 A.M.

Voluntary System of Accountability Student Learning Outcomes Task Force

Summary Note #2: December 7, 2007

Attending: Roberta Allen (Business Information Systems), Benjamin Brown (student), Marcia Feters, chair (Education), Sandra Glista (Speech Pathology and Audiology), Kevin Knutson (Arts and Sciences), Lisa Kruse (Sociology), Jonathan Pugh (Institutional Effectiveness), Vladimir Risukhin (Aviation), Pam Rooney (Business Information Systems) **Absent:** Heidi Egloff (student), Fred Sitkins (Industrial and Manufacturing Engineering), Zoann Snyder (Sociology), Joyce Walker (English)

Feters called the meeting to order at 10:12 A.M.

2. Approval of **Summary Note #1** (11.09.07): Task force approved note as written.
3. Availability of **sample tests**:
 - A sample CLA test is available at <http://cla.cae.org> (Pugh has access instructions).
 - WMU has requested multiple sample copies of MAPP and CAAP for a review period of 90 days.
 - If only one copy of a test is available, it will be kept in a secure resource room.
4. **Feedback** on tests from peers and colleagues:
 - Kalamazoo College:
 - Paul Sotherland of K College has administered CLA and would recommend it.
 - Most difficult part is motivating students to take the test: K College provided incentives.
 - Glista to post details from conversation with Sotherland under e-learning channel “Discussions” tab.
 - WMU:
 - Task force is likely to meet some built-in opposition to CAAP because of colleagues’ past experience of the test.
 - Format of tests:
 - MAPP and CAAP are multiple-choice tests.
 - MAPP has an essay option.
 - CLA is more focused on critical thinking and writing.
 - Colleagues may not be comfortable with assessing writing through multiple choice.
 - Task force is encouraged to continue discussion via Blackboard Vista.
5. Update on **Blackboard Vista** platform:
 - Useful one-stop location for URLs, documents, and discussion.
 - Task force will be notified via e-mail when new items are posted.
 - Pugh to post useful URLs under “Web Links” tab:
 - www.act.org/caap/clients.html (Institutions using CAAP)
 - www.cae.org/content/pdf/School_List_0708.pdf (Institutions using CLA)
 - www.kzoo.edu/ir/cla.html (CLA at Kalamazoo College)
 - www.teaglefoundation.org (includes a primer).
 - Pugh to request list of institutions using MAPP.
6. **Web seminars**:
 - December 5 seminar:

- Looked at aspects of CLA test and their implications for VSA.
- Questions included departmental dissatisfaction and incentives: participation is voluntary, so how does an institution make the longitudinal test effective?
- Slideshow soft copy will be posted under “Local Content” on Vista.
- CLA requires a relatively small pool of students (100) but can be administered to multiple groups across the institution.
- CLA’s good qualities include that it’s anonymous (students are more likely to want to participate).
- December 12 seminar:
 - Task force members are encouraged to participate.
 - Slideshow soft copy will be posted under “Local Content” on Vista.

6. Further **discussion**:

- Incentives:
 - Money and time are the two big issues, particularly in a longitudinal study.
 - Cash is likely to be the most effective incentive.
 - Finding an incentive isn’t difficult, but paying for it is another thing: true administrative costs need to be calculated.
 - Rewarding each participant (e.g., with a cap and gown or parking pass) might prove prohibitively expensive. A prize draw is likely to be more feasible.
 - Another option is to make the incentive larger when the student takes the test again as a senior.
 - The large influx of transfer students in year two brings into question the reliability of the data.
 - Moral incentives:
 - Participation represents service to the University.
 - Research on millennial students confirms that they are service-oriented.
 - Participation is one way of increasing the value of a student’s degree.
 - Faculty motivation and incentives are also issues.
 - Exit interviews/tests:
 - Task force may consider revisiting the senior exit exam that was discontinued in the ’90s. Understanding why it was abandoned (expense, level of difficulty, etc.) may be instructive.
 - Most departments already conduct a form of exit interview/test (usually for accreditation purposes).
- Protection of data:
 - Protection of the student’s privacy is key.
 - Students need not sign a release because the data is returned in aggregate form.
 - Task force will need to establish that test companies have proper safeguards in place to protect the data.
 - Delaware study brought up similar questions, as did ICES.
- Findings and final recommendation:
 - Task force will emphasize that this is an assessment issue, not evaluation.
 - Findings will be presented in two-column format for discussion by Faculty Senate and other groups, one option having been eliminated (with reasons why).
 - Task force will collect feedback from constituents and then make its recommendation.

7. **Next meeting**: Friday, January 25, 9 A.M. to 10:30 A.M., Room 3150, Schneider Hall.

Fetters adjourned the meeting at 11:26 A.M.

Voluntary System of Accountability Student Learning Outcomes Task Force

Summary Note #3: January 25, 2008

Attending: Roberta Allen (Business Information Systems), Benjamin Brown (student), Marcia Feters, chair (Education), Sandra Glista (Speech Pathology and Audiology), Jonathan Pugh (Institutional Effectiveness), David Reinhold (Chemistry), Vladimir Risukhin (Aviation), Pam Rooney (Business Information Systems), Zoann Snyder (Sociology), Thomas Swarz (Industrial and Manufacturing Engineering) **Absent:** Heidi Egloff (student), Kevin Knutson (Arts and Sciences), Lisa Kruse (Sociology), Fred Sitkins (Industrial and Manufacturing Engineering), Joyce Walker (English)

Feters called the meeting to order at 10 A.M.

7. Approval of **Summary Note #2** (12.07.07): Task force approved note as written.

8. December 12 **CLA Web seminar:**

- Scope of test meets criteria.
- Slideshow has been posted to Vista.
- Pugh will contact CAE to find out how to improve reviewers' access to CLA test.

3. **First impressions:**

- CAAP: Task force will need to determine whether or not students find CAAP too easy.
- MAPP: Task force has concerns about how well Multiple Choice can assess writing.
- CLA:
 - Online only.
 - Sample size is a University decision.

4. Presentations to, and likely responses from, **campus constituents:**

- Some faculty worry that assessment findings might be “used against” the University, particularly if WMU chooses the same instrument as a peer institution.
- How can such a small sample of students provide meaningful data?
- Authentic assessment is illustrated by numbers of graduates entering the professional community in their respective fields.
- None of the tests is content-based.
- Task force charge:
 - Some questions raised at comment sessions will not be pertinent to charge.
 - Decision has already been made to implement VSA, of which the institution's choice of assessment instrument is a relatively small, though significant, part.
- While the task force is sympathetic to concerns about the VSA program and will gather *all* feedback associated with student learning outcomes, “buy-in” by campus constituents is not its responsibility.

5. Suggested **reviewing criteria:**

- Testing fatigue: Students are more likely to take a shorter exam.
- Ease of use: Particularly important for an online exam.
- Ease of implementation:
 - Security of exams is crucial.

- How will the University persuade students to give up a freshman class to take the test? In the case of C-BASE and California, both short tests, only a small number of students were required from each class.
 - Measurement of higher-order reasoning skills.
 - Cost: CLA is most expensive.
 - Whether or not the test is criterion-referenced.
6. **Next meeting:** Monday, February 4, 4 P.M. to 5:30 P.M., Room 3150, Schneider Hall:
- Those unable to attend are asked to send their comments to Fetters or Pugh beforehand.
 - Sample tests must be returned to Fetters prior to meeting.
 - Handout (to be prepared by Fetters and e-mailed to task force prior to meetings with constituent groups) will include:
 - Overview of VSA
 - Task force charge
 - Task force membership
 - Table of feedback criteria

Fetters adjourned the meeting at 10:21 A.M.

Voluntary System of Accountability Student Learning Outcomes Task Force

Summary Note #4: February 4, 2008

Attending: Roberta Allen (Business Information Systems), Marcia Feters, chair (Education), Sandra Glista (Speech Pathology and Audiology), Jonathan Pugh (Institutional Effectiveness), David Reinhold (Chemistry), Vladimir Risukhin (Aviation), Pam Rooney (Business Information Systems), Fred Sitkins (Industrial and Manufacturing Engineering), Zoann Snyder (Sociology), Thomas Swarz (Industrial and Manufacturing Engineering) **Absent:** Benjamin Brown (student), Heidi Egloff (student), Kevin Knutson (Arts and Sciences), Lisa Kruse (Sociology), Joyce Walker (English)

Feters called the meeting to order at 4:03 P.M.

9. Feters gave **update** and presented **draft handout**:

- Handout for constituent groups:
 - Consists of VSA overview, information on student learning outcomes, task force charge, and three-column comparison of instruments' key elements.
 - "Findings" sheet will also be presented. Currently consists of General Education Assessment Committee's February 2003 recommendation regarding CAAP, but other items will be added.
 - Presenters will add "Draft" watermark and "Do not distribute" footnote before sharing handout with constituent groups.
- Discussion:
 - Task force debated whether to include information on cost and implementation.
 - Implementation issues are important but should not in themselves determine task force's recommendations.
 - College/department assessment:
 - As a Universitywide system, VSA is entirely separate from college- and department-level accreditation-driven assessment.
 - Student Learning Outcomes section of College Portrait addresses only critical thinking and writing skills. It does not replace programmatic accreditation.

10. **Strengths** and **limitations** of sample tests:

MAPP

N.B. Sample is abbreviated; standard test has 108 multiple choice items.

Strengths:

- Complies with VSA targets
- Inexpensive
- Easy to use and implement
- Relatively short (reduced chance of test fatigue)

Limitations:

- Criterion-referenced
- Of limited use in testing higher-order skills
- Insufficient assessment of "value added" element

CAAP

Strengths:

- Written element tests students' ability to organize their thoughts into a coherent argument

Limitations:

- Lack of analytical reasoning element
- Bias toward verbal persuasion (rhetorical skills) rather than hard logic
- Of limited use in testing higher-order reasoning skills, problem-solving, etc.

CLA

Strengths:

- Deals more extensively with critical/analytical thinking and problem-solving
- Both analytical writing tasks are superior in terms of design and content
- Results will provide information that can inform University decisions

Limitations:

- To what extent does the instrument test the student's ability to compose using a *computer* (not the purpose of the exam) as opposed to testing writing skill itself?
- Does the instrument accommodate students with specific disabilities (e.g., users of Dragon Dictate)? *N.B. This question also applies to MAPP and CAAP*

3. Solicitation of **feedback**:

- It might be beneficial to provide groups with a brief narrative summary of each instrument prior to list of strengths and limitations.
- Schedule:
 - Fetters will present to Faculty Senate Executive Board in February and to Faculty Senate proper in March.
 - Snyder will present to University Assessment Steering Committee in February.
 - Glista will present to Undergraduate Studies Council next week.
- Charge:
 - Task force is not seeking "buy-in" by Faculty Senate or any other campus constituent.
 - Task force's charge is not to defend the VSA but to review the three instruments.
- Additional ramifications:
 - 2011 Higher Learning Commission peer-review team will examine to what extent WMU is using assessment for program change.
 - Although potential use of test results for program enhancement is secondary to task force's charge, appropriate consideration will be given to instruments that enable programs to improve their curricula.

4. **Next meeting:**

- Date and time TBA.
- Task force members are asked to e-mail constituent groups' feedback to Fetters prior to March 13 Faculty Senate meeting.

Fetters adjourned the meeting at 5:31 P.M.

Voluntary System of Accountability Student Learning Outcomes Task Force

Summary Note #5: April 11, 2008

Attending: Marcia Feters, chair (Education), Sandra Glista (Speech Pathology and Audiology), David Reinhold (Chemistry), Vladimir Risukhin (Aviation), Pam Rooney (Business Information Systems), Fred Sitkins (Industrial and Manufacturing Engineering), Zoann Snyder (Sociology), Thomas Swarz (Industrial and Manufacturing Engineering) **Absent:** Roberta Allen (Business Information Systems), Benjamin Brown (student), Heidi Egloff (student), Kevin Knutson (Arts and Sciences), Lisa Kruse (Sociology), Jonathan Pugh (Institutional Effectiveness), Joyce Walker (English)

Feters called the meeting to order at approx. 3 P.M.

1. Review of **summary notes #3** (1.25.08) and **#4** (2.04.08): Both notes were approved as written.
2. **Update:**
 - Faculty Senate Executive Board has advised that the task force address Faculty Senate after white paper is complete and do so in context of VSA as a whole.
 - WMU's adoption of VSA was formally announced at April 3 Faculty Senate meeting.
 - April 7 WMU News item on University's launch of College Portrait:
 - Questions have been raised by campus constituents, particularly in regard to student learning outcomes.
 - Most questions concern cost and implementation, neither of which is part of task force charge.
 - Eileen Evans, vice provost for institutional effectiveness, will present on VSA at May 1 Faculty Senate meeting. Feters, Pugh, and Tracy Pattok of Student Academic and Institutional Research will attend.
3. Review of **VSA SLO Task Force Recommendation** (Version 2) and **White Paper Outline:**

Version 2:

- Editing of recommendation (page 7):
 - Following sentence to be amended: "This instrument has the potential to ... be able to inform general education and programmatic decisions."
 - Revision to include following text (or similar) from page 1: "VSA SLO assessment data ... will be used as one measure to assess general education—this assessment is not intended to replace or fulfill program and departmental assessment policies."

White Paper Outline:

- Concerns raised by constituent groups to be listed prior to final recommendation.
- One- or two-page summary to be included.
- Most tables and charts to be moved to appendix.
- Recommendation will focus on rigor of CLA test, and on fact that neither writing skills nor critical thinking is assessed using multiple choice.
- Other Michigan adopters:
 - To date, other early VSA adopters are Michigan Tech, Michigan State, and Central Michigan.
 - Trio represents WMU's major instate competition.
 - Central is proceeding with CLA.
- Feedback from campus constituents:

- Concerns are likely to focus on assessment instrument.
- White paper will include reminder that VSA timetable allows WMU four years in which to report student learning outcomes.
- Implementation issues will include intersection of CLA with existing writing-assessment initiatives (e.g., WMU baccalaureate writing criteria).

4. **Next steps:**

- Fetters will redraft white paper in narrative form and circulate new version(s) to task force via e-mail.
- Task force is asked to use Track Changes feature of Microsoft Word to edit draft(s).
- Fetters will share preliminary version with Evans on April 28.
- Following feedback from Faculty Senate on May 1, Fetters will present final edited version to Evans.
- Fetters thanked the members of the task force for their hard work; task force reciprocated.

Fetters adjourned the meeting at approx. 3:30 P.M.