

# 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.

1. 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.

2. **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.