

University Assessment Steering Committee Annual Report – April 25, 2005

This is a report to the WMU faculty senate on the accomplishments of the University Assessment Steering Committee (UASC) for the 2004-05 academic year. A previous report was presented orally to the faculty senate by the UASC chairperson, Dr. Robert Wertkin (Social Work), on April 1, 2004.

The UASC continued to work with departments on the development and approval of assessment plans. As of April 2, 2005, there were 57 fully approved plans, 1 plan approved awaiting minor revisions, 3 plans tabled pending further revisions and 1 plan not yet submitted that is due September 15, 2005. The Review and Consultation Teams (RACT) of the UASC continued to provide valuable assistance to departments in the construction and refinement of assessment plans. Special thanks goes to the RACT chairs: David Reinhold (Chemistry), Ed Roth (Music), Brad Dennis (University Libraries), Deb Newson (Muskegon EUP) and Judah Ari-Gur (Engineering).

The UASC developed two important policies this year; both approved by the provost (attached). The Assessment Data Transparency Policy identifies how data is protected and shared at the individual, departmental, college and provost level. The second policy is the Roles of the UASC, Deans, Vice President for Student Affairs, and Office of the Provost in the Lifecycle of Departmental Assessment Plans. This policy sets forth a process for approving and monitoring departmental assessment. A report is generated annually from each department and college that is reviewed by the provost and the UASC. A template (attached) was developed that guides the construction of this report at each level. Three meetings were held in April with department assessment chairs to determine the progress being made in preparing these reports.

Updates were provided at every UASC meeting on TracDat and iWebFolio. Katharine Cummings (Education) was the spokesperson for these SIS components and did an excellent job of keeping the UASC informed, oriented and connected. She also made arrangements so that many UASC members could receive TracDat training. TracDat will ultimately play a critical part in assessment planning, implementation and monitoring.

Members of the UASC attended assessment conferences at IUOUI (Indianapolis) and North Carolina State University. Reports on these conferences were shared with UASC members. Several UASC members attended a special campus session in March on the role of assessment and evaluation in diversity by national expert Dr. Victor Borden.

This was the second year that assessment grants were awarded. The five departments receiving awards were Aviation; CECP; Sociology; Teaching, Learning and Leadership and University Libraries. Areas of focus included assessment system development, management information systems, assessment of student learning, and use of portfolios as evidence of student learning. Findings were presented to the university community on March 17 and were well received with about 30 faculty and staff in attendance. Six new proposals were received this year and are under review.

There was discussion throughout the year on the progress of the Higher Learning Commission Focused Visit committee who is preparing a report for the November site visit by North Central. The UASC contributed to this report by providing input and feedback on components of the report that focus on assessment. The UASC chair served on Focused Visit committee and was a liaison between the two committees.

Dr. Margaret M. Bernhard (interim vice provost for EUP) reported on assessment efforts at the off-campus sites. Dr. Bernhard has examined the assessment plans for departments whose programs are offered at EUP sites. Most plans specified the involvement of the EUP sites in the planned assessments. Several departments were asked to clarify the EUP linkages in their assessment plans and reports.

Elections were conducted in April for a new UASC chair. Dr. Steven Malcolm (Biology) was elected and will assume the chair in May, 2005 through April, 2006. The UASC greatly appreciates Katharine Cumming's continued service as recorder. Dr. Wertkin thanked all committee members for their hard work and contributions this year.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Robert A. Wertkin, Professor
School of Social Work
Chair, University Assessment Steering Committee

Assessment Data Transparency Policy (v3, 11-10-04)

The university differentiates between institutional level data and departmental level data. Institutional level data refer to data and findings from initiatives that do not identify or focus on individual academic units. One example would be the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). Another example is data compiled about undergraduate, graduate, or international students as a panel or cohort.

Each department determines the type and nature of data that can be shared outside of the department. However, college deans can request department-level data as appropriate. As the governing authority for all academic units, the Provost can request data from colleges in order to fulfill the university's obligations. In order to protect confidentiality and privacy, no individual data (e.g. individual students, faculty, or class) will be made available outside the department.

Roles of the UASC, Deans, Vice President for Student Affairs, and Office of the Provost in the Lifecycle of Departmental Assessment Plans

1. UASC approves initial assessment plans.
2. College Deans and the Vice President for Student Affairs monitor the implementation of their assessment plans.
3. Each College and Division having assessment plans reports annually (May 15) to the Provost on the measurement of student learning outcomes for ongoing program improvement. The report:
 - a) Identifies
 - i. Program goals and objectives;
 - ii. Instrumentation for measuring goals and objectives;
 - b) Describes briefly the data collected;
 - c) Describes major findings and how they were used for student learning and program improvements; and
 - e) Lists changes to the departmental-level plans.
4. The UASC will review College and Division reports every Fall and formulate specific recommendations for improvement to the Deans, Vice-President for Student Affairs and Faculty Senate. Recommendations will address whether the assessment findings demonstrate that assessment plans were implemented according to program goals and objectives; and, based on collected data, actions were taken to improve student learning and program outcomes.

TEMPLATE

For

Annual Report on the Measurement of Student Learning Outcomes For Ongoing Program Improvement

College of [NAME]
[NAME of DEAN], Dean
May 15, 2005

Contents

1. Assessment impact report from each department. Departments must use either the TRACDAT Assessment Impact report or the attached Word document entitled “Western Michigan University Assessment Impact Report” that includes the necessary categories/sections of the impact report. Please note that departments will need to complete a copy of the Word document for **EACH outcome** (i.e., student learning objective) **included in the department assessment plan.**
2. Memoranda from chairs of departments/units submitting assessment reports to the dean, answering three questions.
 - a. What specific actions were taken as a result of assessment data? In particular, how have academic programs or courses been affected?
 - b. What specific actions remain to be taken? By what date?
 - c. What changes, if any, were made to the departmental-level plan since July 1, 2004?
3. Memorandum from the dean to the provost, answering three questions.
 - a. Based on the evidence provided by the departments/units, evaluate unit-by-unit the implementation and use of assessment data
 - b. Based on your evaluation of the departments/units, identify the specific steps the individual departments/units and the college will take to address:
 - i. Full implementation of assessment plans
 - ii. Use of assessment data to improve programs
 - c. Based on your evaluation of the departments’ use of assessment data to improve programs, what measures will the college take in Academic Year 2005-2006 to foster a culture of assessment?

NOTE: The template for the report, as well as the form for the assessment impact report, is available on www.wmich.edu/poapa/uac