

University Assessment Steering Committee
Summary Note #53
March 17, 2008

Attending: Patrick Benton, chair (Aviation), Sue Brodasky (Institutional Effectiveness), Steve Malcolm for Maira Bundza (International Programs), Kathy Cummings (EDUC), Laura Darrah (DOSAs), Vincent Desroches (A&S), Marianne DiPierro (Grad College), Edward Eckel (Libraries), Eileen Evans (Institutional Effectiveness), Bruce Ferrin (HCOB), Lin Foulk (Fine Arts), Kevin Knutson (Arts & Sciences), Kristin Lagerquist (Institutional Effectiveness), Peter Parker (CEAS), Dave Reinhold (A&S, Undergrad Studies Council), Zoann Snyder (A&S), Karen Stokes (ex-officio, TracDat), Gwen Tarbox (GSC), Yvonne Unrau (CHHS).

Absent: Alsaud, Ari-Gur, Buwalda, Ickes, LeBlanc, Newson, Robertson

Benton called the meeting to order and asked for approval of Summary Note #52. The summary note was accepted with a revision to Dianna Sachs' name (Parker/Ferrin).

Evans described the process for determining membership and provided the list of current members showing the terms of each member. She will use the same process as in past years (contacting individuals to determine whether they want to continue on UASC before contacting the deans).

Reinhold discussed the curriculum change process and the responses related to assessment. He noted that responses showed a great deal of variation. The committee discussed ways in which faculty and chairs can gain greater understanding of the intent of the assessment-related questions on the curriculum change forms. Parker indicated that the open nature of the questions permits faculty to refer to multiple assessments rather than focusing solely on assessment of student learning. Tarbox suggested that the questions can be used to foster dialogue within the departments. She also recommended that we develop some sample responses to assist departments. Malcolm referred to the overall intent to develop a culture of assessment and indicated that faculty need to see a return for their effort. Reinhold noted that most departments are in a relatively early part of the assessment process and have probably collected data for a short time. He also indicated that he would be meeting with the department curriculum committees to help them navigate the process.

Ferrin requested a change in the agenda so that he would be present for the report on the assessment survey results. No objections were noted. Knutson reported on the survey and indicated that he would provide a summary of responses for the UASC electronically. (He will email it to Kristin Lagerquist for distribution to the group). Knutson requested information about the transfer of money from the Office of Institutional Effectiveness to provide the prizes. He will contact Kristin for the details. Evans suggested that the subcommittee review methodological issues with Snyder and Unrau prior to preparing information for the assessment website.

No additional information from the VSA task group was available (Snyder).

Evans provided information about the university “portrait” that will be included in the VSA online materials, including NSSE items. She noted that, given the administrative support for VSA, the process will move forward as soon as possible. Unrau asked about progress in the areas of the NSSE report that showed a need for improvement at WMU. Keith Hearit is leading the effort to address academic advising issues while Evans has asked for information about the retention rate of specific groups of students. She is hoping to use the information to develop recommendations for all students.

Eckel reported on the SOTL workshop and provided a copy of the brochure for the event. He also discussed the support for faculty work following the workshop. Evans noted that the workshop will be limited to 30 participants who will be invited to attend.

Evans reminded the committee that Assessment Grant applications are due on April 15. Cummings noted that the PATHS session on March 26th will feature past Assessment Fellows who will discuss their projects.

Cummings reported on the subcommittee who met to develop a plan for periodic review of departmental assessment plans. She noted that the subcommittee (Benton, Cummings, Eckel, and Foulk) determined that the strategy should focus on support and consultation with the departments. Groups of UASC members will work with the departments to assist them in reviewing their plans, making improvements to the plans and processes, and moving the information into TracDat. Reinhold indicated that his curriculum-related visits with the departments might be folded into the assessment team visits. Malcolm reminded the committee that the RACT structure could be used to form the teams.

Benton distributed a bulleted list of items to be included in his annual report to the Faculty Senate. Parker suggested a clarification to the last bullet based on today’s discussion. Unrau wondered whether the report should discuss outcomes as well as activities. After discussion about the variety of reasons for assessment-related outcomes on campus (accreditation, program review, market demands, etc.), the committee agreed that the focus of the report should remain on the activities of UASC.

Evans distributed two ETS booklets related to assessment. She discussed the NSSE and FSSE surveys currently in process and indicated that the reports will be available in August.

DiPierro announced that the Graduate College is sponsoring a talk on dissertation quality. The talk will feature Barbara Lovitts and is scheduled for 9:00-11:00 on Monday, April 7th at the Fetzer Center.

The meeting adjourned at 3:59. (Parker/Reinhold)