

University Assessment Steering Committee
Summary Note #57
November 17, 2008

Attending: Patrick Benton, chair (Aviation), Judah Ari-Gur (CEAS), Sue Brodasky (Instructional Technology), Maira Bundza (International Programs), Kathy Cummings (EDUC), Eileen Evans (Institutional Effectiveness), Lin Foulk (Fine Arts), Linda Ickes (DOSA), Kevin Knutson (Arts & Sciences), Marilyn Kritzman (AAUP), Kristin Lagerquist (Institutional Effectiveness), Deb Newson (EUP), Muhammed Razi, subbing for Tim Palmer (HCOB), Carie Robertson (Sindecuse), Yvonne Unrau (CHHS).

Absent: Bragolone, Darrah, DiPierro, Deme, Eckel, Reinhold, Stokes, Tarbox

Guest: Suzan Ayers

Benton called the meeting to order. Summary note #55 with revisions was approved. (Evans/Newson) Summary note #56 was approved. (Cummings/Lagerquist).

Suzan Ayers presented information on the results of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE). Multi-year comparison charts for WMU indicated that scores for advising had improved from the 2006 score. Our results on the FSSE are similar to those of our peer institutions. It was noted that results are not available by department or program. Reports on the results will be available online for use in decision making at the institutional level. Colleges, departments, and programs may also use the data as they plan.

Lagerquist discussed the revamping of the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE) website. The goal of the changes is to improve the visibility of assessment-related activities on campus. Ease of navigation is also a driving factor in making changes to the site. Foulk, Bundza, and Kritzman offered to work with Lagerquist on the design.

Benton distributed a list of themes from the UASC survey results. These themes included three that were somewhat negative and one that was somewhat positive: Respondents seemed unsure of the value of assessment, they were not familiar with their own units' plans and methods for assessment, they identified a low level of support for assessment within their departments and colleges, and they indicated that assessment does have value. The contradiction between the first theme and the last was noted. UASC probably needs to continue its efforts to promote assessment across campus and engage more people in the work. It seems that only a few people in each area are actively engaged in assessment efforts. UASC members brainstormed about possible support for assessment, including recognition of the scholarly aspects of assessment work, communication of the importance of assessment throughout the leadership of the university and colleges, potential reassigned time for assessment, and financial support for surveys, tests, and data management. Ari-Gur noted the variation among departments in terms of their engagement in assessment and suggested that UASC might focus on the departments most actively engaged. . It was noted that UASC's "place" in the university structure and governance is unclear. Unrau suggested that assessment may require some technical expertise and perhaps could be guided by a professional in the area. Ari-Gur noted that assessment is simply part of the job of a faculty member and is unlikely to be seen as anything "extra" in terms of promotion and tenure decisions.

Evans discussed "appreciative inquiry" and its focus on moving forward from strengths. She noted that HLC provides training on appreciative inquiry as well as assessment. This approach may provide an opportunity for the university and the UASC to plan for the next five years in a way that builds on our strengths.

A discussion on UASC's role in the university structure will be postponed.

It was noted that the dean's annual assessment reports are available online.

The Division of Student Affairs (DOSA) assessment plans are moving to a focus on developing a system of assessment for DOSA rather than having completely separate plans for each unit. The systems approach should provide support for the development of plans that address the differences between DOSA and the academic units.

The meeting was adjourned. (Kritzman/Cummings)