

memo

College of Aviation

To: Eileen Evans, Vice Provost for Institutional Effectiveness
From: Dave Powell, Dean, College of Aviation
CC: Gil Sinclair, Chair, Department of Aviation Sciences
Pat Benton, Chair, College of Aviation Assessment Committee
Date: 8/22/2008
Re: Dean's Annual Assessment Report

This memorandum serves as the required assessment report from the Dean to the Provost. Six (6) questions are to be answered:

- 1) Based on evidence provided by the departments/units, evaluate unit-by-unit the implementation and use of assessment data in improving programs.

Curriculum change: IME 1020 (Technical Communication) added as a pre-requisite for AVS 3650 (Non-Destructive Testing). One of the college's overall learning outcomes is competency in written communication. During assessment of AVS3650 many students were found to be lacking in this area and so the curriculum change to add IME1020 as a pre-requisite was initiated to resolve the situation.

Comparison of FAA test scores for private, instrument and commercial licensing with the national averages is one of our assessment methods. A sub-committee of the College Assessment Committee is currently working on a method to automatically collect and record our student test scores. This would replace the traditional method of manually searching through paper files to obtain the information. Thus scores will be captured and automatically entered into a database making comparisons with national averages much easier and more useful.

- 2) Based on your evaluation of unit implementation, what exemplars of best practice do you find? Examples include, but are not limited to, clarity of student learning outcomes, assessment methods, forms of evidence used, configuration of direct and indirect measures, inclusion of students, improvements identified and implemented.

During our program accreditation process the objectives for all courses were reviewed and redesigned as outcomes. Outcomes were then matched to competency requirements for follow on courses to create a progressive structure for student learning throughout each program. In part, this was done in reverse fashion – i.e. the required competencies for enrollment into a particular course were identified first and then matched to outcomes in pre-requisite courses. One simple example has already been mentioned in answering question #1. A required competency for AVS3650 is in written communication and such a competency is an outcome of IME1020 which is now a pre-requisite.

Several professors have changed mid-term, final exam and assignment formats to better match assessment of outcomes. Exam questions and assignments are now tied to specific outcomes to better enable assessment as to whether outcomes have actually been met by individual students. The assessment committee is developing methods whereby this data can be collected and analyzed over the long term.

- 3) Beginning in fall 2008, the University Steering Committee will review and approve departmental and unit assessment plans and examine the uses made of findings (University Assessment Plan, 2003, p. 5). Please

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indicate which departments, according to their assessment impact reports, have reviewed and revised their plans and are prepared for UASC review in 2008-09, 2009-10, and 2010-11, respectively.

The College Assessment Committee is currently still working on updating the assessment plan. The chair of the committee is working on a draft of the plan revision which will incorporate changes agreed to during committee meetings during last spring semester. The draft will be presented to the committee at their first meeting in the fall and the intention is to have the revision completed during the school year and ready for UASC review.

- 4) In what ways has the college addressed those challenges cited in the January 10, 2008, letter from the provost to the dean?

The letter cited slow progress in monitoring implementation of the department assessment plan and for formal review of findings at the departmental level. Although there has still been no formal review, primarily because 2007-08 saw the college working with an interim Dean and conducting a Dean search, there has been significant feedback from industry. For example the success rate of our Flight Science graduates who have entered regional airlines and undergone their rigorous training programs has been 100%. Furthermore, verbal feedback from these carriers has heaped praise on our students and complemented our program as cutting edge and exactly what the industry is looking for.

Feedback about students in our Science and Administration program has also been very positive, not only in the skill level of graduates but also in the type of characters we are producing. Our Aviation Maintenance Graduates are now much sought after and in fact one local company has stated that it will hire all of our graduates if they wish. The only criticism we have had from industry about our maintenance graduates is that there are too few of them. Again, the praise has been mostly about the character of our students rather than their skill level, which is of lesser importance to industry, not to say that the skill level is not commendably high.

This feedback combined with the results of our senior survey have indicated that curriculum changes undertaken to modernize our programs to bring them up to date with the requirements of a very dynamic industry have proven successful. We recognize that the senior survey needs to be updated and repeated and this is one of the goals of the curriculum committee this year along with the full revision of our assessment plan.

Engagement of students in assessment-related discussions is steadily improving. The Dean and Chair meet with the e-boards of the five RSOs within the college monthly and feedback from students about quality of the content of courses and assessment methods are part of the discussions. Many students complete internships out in the industry and on return are able to give perceptions about industry needs and outcomes that we should be concentrating on, which ultimately will lead to recommendations to the curriculum committee for suggested improvements.

- 5) What evidence is there to show that during 2007-08 the college, through allocation of its resources, supported the work of faculty colleagues in assessing student learning? In what other ways did the college foster a culture of assessment?

During 2007-08 there were no resources used directly in support of assessing student learning. During the year, administration and faculty were heavily involved in conducting searches for a permanent Dean and for three faculty positions. However, students were given the opportunity to pose written questions (anonymous if desired) resulting from two all college meetings held during the year. A few of these questions referred to methods of student assessment and gave the college chair the opportunity to explain briefly in writing to all students the need for evaluating student learning and the move to the outcomes based assessment.

Furthermore, discussion was begun about a program of forums on assessment for faculty and it is intended to progress with arrangements for these during the coming year.

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- 6) For 2008-09 at the college level, what are the goals for supporting departments in implementing their departmental assessment plans, and what are the expected outcomes?

The faculty intends to hold a retreat early in the fall, with a follow up retreat later in the same semester, to discuss curriculum issues and assessment. Arrangements have begun for these retreats and the intention is that they will be run by the faculty and not by the administration, although the departmental chair will be closely involved in the logistical arrangements and take an active part in the retreats themselves by invite from the faculty.

In addition, the College Assessment Committee plans to complete its review of our assessment plan this semester and implement changes through the faculty.