

University Assessment Council Minutes

Friday, April 3, 2009
1:30 – 3:00 p.m.
250 Student Union (Council Room)

Present: Comer, Davis, Edwards, Gates, Hawkins, Leising, Rohrs, Swinney, Mowen, Ownbey, Paustenbaugh, Ray, Thompson, Wilber

Absent: Damron, Haseley, Lacy, Payton

Minutes from the February 6, 2009 meeting were reviewed. No corrections were requested.

Ray presented information regarding the administration of the CIRP Freshman Survey as agreed at the previous meeting. The cost for the Fall 2008 survey was \$2254. A discussion among Directors of Student Academic Services indicated that the CIRP is not currently utilized except by University Academic Services staff through their Freshman Orientation course. Ray suggested that due to this lack of utilization, it might be best to replace the CIRP with the Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement (BCSSE), which has a comparable cost and is designed to directly compliment the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). Council members generally agreed with this recommendation, and more information regarding the BCSSE will be presented prior to the next administration of the NSSE.

Members discussed the joint meeting of the General Education Advisory Council, the General Education Assessment Committee, and the Assessment Council. Per request at the meeting, a list of assessment resources available at OSU was provided to all Assessment Council members. Since the joint meeting, the General Education Advisory Council approved a process for collection of artifacts from courses with general education designations. The process involves a memo being sent by the Provost each semester to each academic department with general education designated courses to remind them of the requirement to submit artifacts upon request. UAT will determine courses to recruit each semester to obtain a representative sample of courses, and will contact the course instructor and department head. In cases where the instructor is non-responsive, the instructor, department head, and dean will be contacted to inform them that the general education designation is in jeopardy. If the instructor, department head, and dean are all responsive, GEAC will notify them that the designation will be dropped effective the following semester until a plan for participation in assessment efforts is provided to GEAC.

Several additional recommendations were discussed that were either presented to the group by the General Education Assessment Committee or suggested during the joint meeting. Members first discussed a recommendation made during the joint meeting to require each academic program to submit artifacts from at least one course in an effort to increase the representation across campus. While this could increase representation in certain outcome areas, it was noted that most artifacts would likely be best suited for assessing writing ability, and the assessment of the remaining outcomes may not be benefited in the same manner. Members agreed to wait one to two years before pursuing such a recommendation to first identify the impact of the GEAC-approved process.

Members also discussed adding a requirement of an upper-level writing course to all undergraduate programs. This course would not necessarily be the implementation of a new course, particularly given current budgetary restrictions, but could instead be met by the identification or modification of an existing course. Several members indicated that in their department and/or college, such a requirement already existed. Additional concerns were presented related to specific disciplines such as mathematics and statistics, and a recommendation was made to shift the focus to critical thinking instead, which would often be measured through writing assignments, and thus might meet the goals of both outcomes areas. As a result of this discussion, each college will be asked to identify which programs already have upper-division writing and/or critical thinking requirements, and to identify where in the curriculum students are expected to gain these skills. Additional discussion focused upon the need to identify programs, within the

university and outside of it, that can serve as examples related to future policy decisions to enhance writing and critical thinking ability, such as the critical thinking requirement in the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Colorado.

The third recommendation discussed concerned the possibility of developing benchmark scores for each of the general education outcomes. As the focus of such recommendation would be to indicate a need for curricular change, and because Council members noted that there is sufficient evidence to indicate that change needs to occur related to all five outcome areas, it was determined that benchmark scores were not currently useful. Instead, the focus should be upon making improvements and revisiting the idea of benchmark scores once such changes have been implemented.

Further discussions will be held among the college assessment coordinators regarding the creation of intramural grants for innovative assessment strategies and recognition programs for faculty members and academic programs that are currently excel in their involvement with assessment efforts. Additionally, the General Education Assessment Committee is continuing the faculty development workshop series next year, and will be discussing the possibility of adding a second-tier workshop as suggested in the joint meeting.

Ray informed members that the 2008-09 annual reports and the FY10 program outcomes budget requests will be due by Friday, June 5, 2009. The annual reports and budget requests will be submitted by the programs directly to the college assessment coordinators, who will review the documents prior to their submission to University Assessment and Testing.

The following announcements and updates were provided:

- The Survey of Alumni of Graduate Programs has been completed, and results will be disseminated to academic programs on or around May 1st for inclusion in this year's assessment reports.
- The NSSE is currently underway with a current response rate of 17.3%. Specific information has been provided to Instruction Council members in an effort to increase participation prior to the final reminder on April 16th.
- A satisfaction survey has been conducted among OSU students who participated in the NOC-OSU Gateway program to identify their views related to academic preparation, the transition process, and services available at both campuses. Final results will be disseminated by the end of the semester.
- There are currently only two university-wide survey projects that are scheduled for next year: the Survey of Alumni of Undergraduate Programs and the Graduate Student Satisfaction Survey. Departments will receive more information to participate in both surveys early next semester.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 p.m.