Assessment and Academic Improvement Council

Friday, September 7, 2012
1:30 PM, Student Union Sequoyah Room
Minutes

1. Introductions and welcome
Present:
Penn provided a welcome and an update on his new addition over the summer.

2. Discussion activity: Evaluating assessment
Penn asked attendees to read the discussion activity starter. The prompts were taken from a presentation by Dr. Lynn Priddy, from the Higher Learning Commission, and are closely related to the "Six Fundamental Questions" regarding assessment the Higher Learning Commission has developed. Penn suggested all six questions might be helpful to reflect upon at the college level, but asked, for the sake of brevity, to focus the discussion at this meeting on question #6: "What steps, if any, are we making to assure full, accurate, and open disclosure about the degree to which students are achieving stated learning outcomes, as well as plans to improve that achievement?"

-Committee member noted that the answer to this question might be very different for different types and levels of assessment. For example, institutional assessment results (like the National Survey of Student Engagement) might have a very different approach than what might be done at the degree program level.

-Committee member asked how OSU is doing on this topic relative to peers. Penn responded that OSU generally has more institution- and program-level assessment data available than our peer institutions. However, it is not clear the extent to which our stakeholders can make meaning out of those data. In addition, a number of stakeholders (e.g., parents) may find the technical nature of many of the reports difficult to understand. Further, some stakeholders may have questions that are not directly answered by the assessment data that are available or have questions that can be answered by assessment data but have difficulty finding the answers.

-Committee member asked about the extent to which "value-added" was made clear in the reports. Would it be possible to be more clear about the growth students make from freshman to senior year?

-Committee member asked about sharing data with K-12 stakeholders. Would our feeder schools be interested in hearing more about OSU's assessment data? What about at the state level (for K-12 schools)?

-Committee member suggested working with New Student Orientation and Admissions to help them answer questions about assessment data or to use the data to answer students' questions.

-What information might parents find helpful? What do they want to know?

-All of the degree programs' assessment reports are available on the website. But would a parent understand anything that is in them? What about creating a *Reader's Digest* version of the assessment reports that would provide simple points of information for each degree program? For example, parents might want to know: 1) What do students learn in this degree program? 2) How do students typically demonstrate their learning in this degree program? 3) What is being done to improve the degree program? 4) What do students do after they graduate (common jobs or graduate programs)? UAT could create a website to summarize this information that could be made readily available and searchable. UAT will work on drafting something along these lines and then bring it back to AAIC for discussion.

3. Updates from colleges and units
-Each College and Unit in attendance was given the opportunity to provide an update on what was happening in assessment.
CAS: The College has welcomed a new dean this summer. The Dean has interest in assessment and will be including assessment as part of departmental evaluations.
COE: The NCATE cycle is just beginning, and the degree programs that are accredited by NCATE are ramping up to be prepared for the accreditation process. They are also looking carefully at how assessment is communicated for the Aviation program due to interest from Aviation's accreditor. Judy Nalon is new to OSU this summer and will be supporting assessment in the college.
SSB: This is the self-study year for business programs so they will be heavily involved in that process. They have made changes to make assessment more methodical, focusing on a 1-2 tests each year instead of trying to cover everything every year. Their data mining shop will be looking at data on critical thinking performance using results from a critical thinking exam and other data gathered from students. They will also be looking at alignment with who is teaching critical thinking and how critical thinking is integrated into the curriculum.
Human Sciences: There has been some turn over on Assessment Coordinators, and the college is working with the Assessment Coordinators to bring them up to speed.
CEAT: This college also has a new dean who is implementing some new initiatives. An ABET team arrives this Sunday and will be reviewing one of their degree programs. The college is also looking more closely at the "flipped" classroom [where students watch videoed lectures outside of class then work on problems and projects with faculty guidance in class] to evaluate the effectiveness of such an approach.
CASNR: There has been some turnover of Assessment Coordinators in this college as well. They want to start working on sharing between degree programs and implementing some assessment initiatives more broadly across programs.
Student Affairs: The large freshman class is a blessing but also brings challenges for Student Affairs and for assessment in Student Affairs. They are working on assessing how students fit in at OSU.
Libraries: The library is implementing a special study on how the top students are using the library and what strategies might be helpful to increase students' performance.

4. Incentives for participation in assessment activities and surveys: Jennifer Paustenbaugh
-Paustenbaugh described the challenges in getting approval to provide incentives for students to complete assessment projects and surveys. Without incentives it can be very challenging to convince students to participate in assessment. There also seems to be no consistency on campus with regards to what is allowed and what is not allowed as an incentive. For example, there were several giveaways this fall of iPads on campus. However, other units asked if they could giveaway an iPad as an assessment incentive but were told that was not permitted by OSU policy.
-Penn described the steps UAT went through to create an impress cash fund in order to give students an incentive to complete the ETS Proficiency Profile a few years ago. UAT had been told it was not possible to give out cash. However that next year Penn participated in a research event on campus and was given cash at the end of the research project for participating.
-Penn noted that an additional challenge for units might be that they don't know who, or which office, is allowed to grant exceptions for the purchase of incentives. For example, if a unit wanted to use an iPad as an incentive, where might they go to get permission to do so? Their dean? Accounting? Academic Affairs? All of the above? Some clarity on this question would be helpful as well.
-Paustenbaugh will draft some language AAIC will consider with regards to incentives and perhaps make a recommendation on a request process where units could request approval to use incentives, or at least make it clear who or which office(s) need to be included in approving such a request.

5. Funding for program outcomes assessment
-Penn provided a summary on funding awarded to support program outcomes assessment. Faculty stipends and graduate student salary continue to be the top to categories of expenditures. However, purchase of exam (or reimbursement of students who pay for licensure exams out of their own pockets) has dramatically increased over the last few years and the amount approved in this area is now close to what is approved in the other two top categories. More funding was requested in exams than in any other category.
-A proposed update to policy regarding reimbursement by degree programs that received funding but did not submit an Annual Assessment Report will be discussed in October.

6. Discussion: formation of support services assessment council
HLC Criterion Four: "The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments, **and support services**, and it evaluates their **effectiveness** for student learning through processes designed to promote **continuous improvement**" [bold added].
-Penn noted that this is the new general statement about assessment in the Higher Learning Commission's criteria for accreditation. Note that it includes support services.

-Penn asked if the group thought a new assessment group, meeting 1-2 times per semester that included representatives from support services, would be helpful. Penn also asked who the group felt should be included in "support services."
-Group thought the Writing Center, and the Math Learning Success Center would definitely be included in this definition, but were not sure about advising, career services, the health center, the Registrar, the Bursar, or other areas. Does HLC have a clear definition on support services? Penn will follow-up with HLC.
-Committee member noted that the text specifically student learning, so perhaps areas without a student learning mission might be excluded from this definition? Those areas would certainly be interested in service quality, but it might be a stretch for them to assess student learning since they do not have a specific student learning mission.

7. Informational updates
-Hathcoat provided an update on the progress of the NSSE and the Survey of Alumni from Undergraduate Programs (SAUP). The SAUP analysis is nearly completed and reports have been posted to the public website (with redactions on student comments as appropriate). The 2012 SAUP institutional report will be posted in a few weeks. Generally, alumni continue to be very satisfied with OSU and are finding employment.
-Some partial NSSE results have been released. Hathcoat noted that although the response rate was low, it was not substantially lower than at our peer institutions. Penn stated that when OSU received the first report on the number of students who had responded, the office tried to ask for a change to the IRB to allow the office to phone call students to ask them to take the NSSE. This request was denied by the NSSE office, saying that they could not make changes to their own IRB in the middle of the implementation. Penn said OSU should pursue different strategy for improving the response rate in the future. Comer asked about the paper version of the NSSE as that had a very high response rate. Penn said that version is much more expensive than the web version and many orientation classes do not have time for another survey. The NSSE is also administered in the spring semester, not the fall. But perhaps that approach could be explored in future years.
-Penn provided a quick summary on the NSSE benchmarks. OSU did better on supportive campus environment for freshmen. However OSU was still scoring lower than peer institutions for seniors on the reported level of academic challenge.
-Penn encouraged AAIC members to continue to promote the faculty development opportunities available through UAT this semester: the Program Outcomes Assessment series and series available in Written Communication, Diversity, and Critical Thinking. Comer and Wilber are leading two of these series and provided updates on those workshop series.

Meeting adjourned at 2:50 PM.

Handouts:
Discussion activity
Assessment budget guidelines proposed revisions 2012

Funding approval summary request fy13
AAIC 2012-2013 membership list