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Assessment of student learning committee minutes 2-14-13

Present: Ted Pappenfus, Wendy Emo, Stacey Aronson, Barbara Burke, Jim Toegas, Jana Koeler, Andrew Sletten, Emily Sunderman, Brooks Jessup, Nancy Helsper

Absent: Steve Burks

1. **Minute Taker**—Barbara
2. **Approval of minutes from 1-31-13.** All were in favor.

3. **UPDATE on progress regarding the GenEd surveys**

Nancy reported that the Dean approved implementation costs up to \$660, and that the surveys have been created by the U's Office of Measurement Services.

(The surveys contain the Nov-meeting-approved wordings, and could not incorporate Steve's Jan. suggestions.)

The surveys will be available to Spring, Summer and Fall 2013 graduates, a total of 353 UMM students. Students will receive an email invitation to participate, with an embedded link to follow.

Details regarding the Higbee's gift coupon for completion are being arranged.

The "run dates" of the survey will be Feb 18th-March 8th—3 weeks. (Nancy notes that the run overlaps a student health survey from the TC campus, but hopes that will not negatively affect our response rate.)

Ted asked students in our committee to promote the survey among their senior-friends, and Barbara suggested it be discussed as an item for the University Register—to which Emily replied it may be added as part of the MCSA column.

4. **UPDATE on the Summer Assessment conference in Vermont**

The UMM campus has proposed sending representatives from every campus division—Bart Finzel (Dean & SS), Wes Flinn (HUM), Nancy Helsper (Admin), Ted Pappenfus (SCI/ MATH) Gwen Rudney (EDU), and Tisha Turk (HUM)

5. **2010 Higher Learning Commission (HLC) Report review, analysis and comments**

In addition to notes emailed earlier additional feedback includes:

Ted—HLC notes a "lack of baseline data on student learning outcomes"

Jim—p 17, 2 the statement regarding curriculum re-writes "except for some adjustments... no change since 1989" was false. A new program of GenEds was created by committee, and approved by Assembly in 1997, and implemented in 1999.

Jim also said—p. 18, 3, the statement about applying assessments tools in disciplines only after two decades is not true. Jim says in the following paragraphs references are made to the 1990

and 2000 accreditation documents (which he worked on). The advice from 2000 to “stop planning and start doing assessment” was not accurate, therefore, as Jim said assessment was already going on. Furthermore, members of the review team talked to two faculty with disagreeing perspectives, and the assertion that assessment was “cumbersome” did not accurately reflect campus perceptions at that time.

Jim and Nancy note date-based errors as follows—p. 18 the “2000 report” in the paragraph after “cumbersome” should be 2005, and the follow-up report of 2007 mentioned on p. 28 is not clearly connected to other reports.

5. FUTURE action regarding the 2010 HLC report—a response/ follow-up regarding assessment practices (culture of assessment) is due by 2015, this committee may be responsible for writing all or part of the response.

Addressing issues--Jim suggests we should strongly say “there IS a culture of assessment at UMM” and “push back” against the arguments of earlier reports saying otherwise.

As evidence of the “culture” Jim notes we can give back the 2010 evidence from HLC p 17 that says “all disciplines do it” and give details. Although the HLC may say our efforts are “not enough” Jim argued that is not the same as saying we have done none of what was asked. Especially the phrase “build a culture of...” is vague, unclear (mixed messages are being sent) and/or untrue (based on anecdotes rather than evidence) Jim stated.

Wendy asked how is “culture of assessment” defined? Nancy replies that maybe the comment comes from HLC hearing faculty say they are doing assessment grudgingly. To follow-up, Wendy asked “does the assessment information inform (future) teaching and curriculum?”

Jim replied that individual programs and classes are evaluated, but not (often) the whole major, and not the campus-wide curriculum. Furthermore he believes what HLC is really wanting is GenEd assessment as a unit (collectively rather than separated out by discipline courses that are demonstrating discipline-based goals.)

Wendy asked in what ways are our reports showing that we use the data to “close the loop” and to demonstrate what we can say students know/ need to know to be educated within the GenEd/SLOs?

We discussed if/ how SLOs can be used to evaluate the GenEds. Ted explained that the previous Dean initiated the SLOs as a topic-of-importance, and they were approved by Assembly in March 2010 but not applied in a significant way. Andrew asks, if there is SLO data, who sees it?

Jana noted that SLOs are requested within program review documents, and programs are to provide 5 years of data, so in the future report we may be able to gather and use that information.

It was noted, there seems to be a lack of campus uniformity regarding assessment of disciplines as well as GenEds/SLOs. Ted says the committee can push the campus, but he perceives what is

lacking is a streamlining of data requests (“this is what we want to ask”) and reporting (“this is the form to use to give answers”) that hinder the construction of easy-to-read information.

Stacey said the new report might be based on “what we have” -- that we have more from some programs and less from others, and it will be challenging to see what is relevant.

Nancy suggested there are available reporting templates (Stacey concurred), but that is not the complete answer to our assessment information management situation, since they have not been already used.

In summary—a CLEAR Committee request—to have an employee devoted to the task of gathering, interpreting and summarizing the assessment information we have, and creating a report of the kind requested by HLC.

Wendy noted that looking at other schools is informative—for instance the Mankato web page has easy to understand, clear information about their assessment. That report was created by the Education Dean and 1 full-time faculty member with an “assessment appointment” (who did nothing else at the time of the report-writing).

Nancy would also like to have resources to do graduate transcript evaluations, to identify if there are patterns of courses commonly taken or not taken for GenEds. Emily noted that since many students come to UMM with AP and PSEO credits, usually in their GenEds, it may be that fewer of our students complete their GenEds while actually at our campus.

The understanding of the committee is that we have several pieces of information already, but it needs to be organized. The supplemental information gathering could then be strategic, to gather “missing pieces” instead of asking all of campus to gather another round of the same kind of information they have already submitted.

It was noted, many colleges hire full-time faculty to do the task or contract out the work to consultant-experts. Because it is so important to create the report (and as Wendy noted, at our schedule of meetings that would be a report done at the end of the 12th-upcoming meeting of this committee), it seemed especially reasonable for the institution to hire someone to get the work done.

Ted noted that the Dean requested for us to clarify what resources we would like to have to get the necessary tasks done (and a description of what those tasks may be). Ted requests that we clarify and operationalize our understanding of what is required, and that for the next meeting we come up with a “game plan” we can push forward as a request for a hire.