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Assessment of Student Learning

University of Minnesota, Morris

DATE: April 16, 2002

SUBJECT: Assessment of Student Learning Committee Minutes

PRESENT: Dian Lopez (Chair), Stephen Burks, Edith Borchardt, Tom Johnson, Tim O'Keefe, John Schwaller, Nancy Mooney, Michelle Page, and Nick Maxwell

ABSENT: Tim Soderberg and Grant Noland

The Assessment of Student Learning committee meeting began at 1:00 PM in the Student Activities Conference room. Lopez said that the information for the Student Opinion of Teachers Survey (SOTS) was distributed electronically to the Executive Board on Monday, April 8. She explained that the information did not get to the Executive Board Meeting in time because the meeting had been rescheduled for Monday, April 8 at 8 am, it was originally scheduled for Tuesday, April 9. She said that she has not heard whether or not it will be place on the docket for the next Assembly meeting.

NCA Meeting

Schwaller discussed information obtained from the NCA meeting, which he attended in Chicago. He said that NCA is now called the Higher Learning Commission. Schwaller discussed the assessment program at one liberal arts campus. He said that interesting and innovative steps are embedded into the program. The school has established goals for the undergraduate curriculum; the goals are embedded in all courses of the curriculum.

One model asks the Professor at the end of the term to report if the student has satisfied the GER objectives. These reports are kept separate from grades; they are used only for assessment purposes.

Borchardt questioned how the assessing was done? Schwaller replied that a criteria is established, that it is purely subjective, and that the only purpose is for assessment, to observe if the objectives set forth were met. O'Keefe discussed (as an example) the GER Category for Global Village. Schwaller said that guidelines for meeting the course objectives can be given to the faculty members; and that the GER and the objective should be used side by side effectively. Schwaller said that it would increase the faculty workload by 1 form per semester. He noted two important points:

1. The students must know that the data will not effect whether or not they pass the course.
2. The faculty must know that it will not be used for their faculty evaluation review, it is data information only.

Maxwell said that it appears that all course objectives could be met, but it is not necessarily true that the student has mastered the objectives of the Course GER. Schwaller replied that there does not need to be a correlation between the two. Johnson said that the GER is a measure of how well we do, of what we do. Schwaller said that the information obtained from both the faculty and student evaluation is fed back to the course, this information can be used for

improvements. O'Keefe noted that if students were evaluating what they think, it would vary because the standards for fulfilling the requirements will be reflected differently by each faculty member. Schwaller said that the purpose of assessment is to learn how well we are doing, and if we are meeting the objectives. He said that there is no right or wrong way of doing assessment. Schwaller felt this was a very interesting model that he wanted to share with the committee; additional handouts and information can be obtained. Schwaller said that the NCA is clear about the assessment program, it is for the internal consumption of each school. Lopez commented that we have always assessed informally, but now assessment is more formal - it is a way to measure and improve our courses.

Schwaller discussed the Academic Quality Improvement Project (AQIP). We could establish such a program of objective criteria and continually monitor with regular brief reports designated by the campus. The AQIP program would be less intense, would be ongoing, and there would be a regular review of the objectives. Schwaller noted that the URL of the AQIP program is a clickable link from http://www.thehigherlearningcommission.org.

Student Opinion of Teachers Survey (SOTS)

Lopez said that revisions to the SOTS had been made. Schwaller said that the re-numbering of the questions was fine, as long it is acceptable with the Twin Cities campus. Schwaller commented that the response rate of the web survey was poor, and that he is not eager to try it again. Burks said that the feedback from the students is strong - they want anonymity of the student comments. Maxwell also stated that the students are concern with the handwritten comments, and said that they passed the following resolution:

Morris Campus Student Association
Resolution on the Student Opinion of Teaching Form
April 15, 2002

WHEREAS,

original copies of UMM's Student Opinion of Teaching forms are returned to instructors and,

WHEREAS,

UMM students who take care to fully complete this form can many times be identified by distinct penmanship and,

WHEREAS,

UMM students should be afforded the opportunity to fully complete Student Opinion of Teaching forms without identifying themselves.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED,

that the students of UMM encourage the administration to formulate a process of collecting the information on the Student Opinion of Teaching forms in a manner that preserves the privacy of students.

Maxwell also noted that there is not alot of structure for when the faculty give the survey; such as, labs, classtimes, i.e. It was suggested to use either an awards or punitive approach to encourage the students to complete the survey. Burks shared the opinion, but questioned if the students are prepared to take the tradeoff. It was agreed that steps should be taken to revamp the form, and that the form should eventually include typed comments. Other comments included:

- allow classtime for the survey
- send out e-mail reminders to the students encouraging them to complete the survey
- Explore student perspective on the tradeoffs, it should not be a punitive measure
- Do the survey as a bubble sheet, but have web based comments. There were concerns that students would not want to do both forms.

O'Keefe suggested the following:

1. We could go with the survey as it is now,
2. Go with the sticks (punitive or award), not this year, but maybe in a few years ,
3. type up the comments,
4. try again, with a written reminder, releasing from class, and also sending out e-mail reminders to students who have not completed the survey.

It was agreed that it is worthwhile to give an instruction sheet to the students for the survey, Maxwell felt that it is important that the instructor contacts the students. Page was concerned that at the end of the semester there would not be enough time to send out e-mail reminders. It was stated that it could be set up as an animated e-mail list, the instructor would only need to type one message, and it would be automatically sent to those who had not completed the survey.

Maxwell said that the web-based SOTS form is the easiest and it can be made to work. He said that if we don't move toward the web, then we are not addressing the concerns of the students. Schwaller suggested ways in which to encourage the students to complete the survey, 1) use of awards or punitive measures, 2) include a check box on the survey for students to mark if they do not wish to participate. This would be a way for the students to opt out of the survey. Maxwell said it should be a trade-off for both the student and faculty. Lopez suggested that, eventually, students will be able to take the surveys electronically at their desks with hand-held devices and via a wireless network. This would eliminate many of the problems we are having now.

As final bookkeeping tasks, Lopez asked for corrections or approval of the ASL Minutes dated 3/26/02 and 4/2/02. Two corrections for the ASL Minutes dated 4/2/02 were noted. Maxwell moved the approval with the corrected changes, seconded by O'Keefe, unanimously approved.

Lopez distributed a handout "Information Technology - Electronic Portfolios" from the Chronicle of Higher Education for review. Lopez said that portfolios are very helpful but not necessarily for assessment purpose at this time.

Lopez said that at the next meeting, time and date to be determined, the agenda would include:

1. What we have accomplished this year
2. Set the agenda for next year

Meeting adjourned at 2:10 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Pederson

URL: http://www.morris.umn.edu/committees/asl/minutes.04.16.02.html