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Assessment of Student Learning Minutes  
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4-17-2008

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# Assessment of Student Learning

University of Minnesota, Morris

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**DATE:** April 17, 2008

**SUBJECT:** Assessment of Student Learning Committee Minutes

**PRESENT:** Jim Togeas (Chair), Tom Johnson, Michael O'Reilly, Mary Elizabeth Bezanson, Nancy Helsper, Hsing-Wen Hu, and Chris Vinderslev.

**ABSENT:** Therese Buchmiller, Donna Chollett, and Abby Swafford

**Minutes:** recorded by Linda Pederson

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The meeting began at 8:00 AM in the Moccasin Flower Room.

## **ALSC Minutes, 03/27/08**

Togeas asked for corrections/additions/deletions or approval of the ASL Minutes dated March 27, 2008. Helsper noted a correction to the minutes, minutes approved as amended.

## **Report from Subcommittee on Learning Outcomes**

Togeas said the agenda today is to review and discuss the report of the Subcommittee on Learning Outcomes prepared by Lawrence (Chair), and others. Togeas said the ASLC task is to look at the overall structure and specifics of the report, and said a couple members of the ASLC should meet at another time and compile the committee's comments.

Togeas said our agenda item for the March 27 meeting was whether UMM should adopt, modify, and adopt, or not adopt the Senate's seven learning outcomes, but we did not get far. He said members expressed interest in the subcommittee's report. He suggested the ASLC study and discuss the report, judge it for its strengths and weaknesses, and send our comments and/or recommendations to the Curriculum Committee.

Discussion included:

- Use what we have, divide the Learning outcomes into 3 broad overlapping categories, and can compare with the seven learning outcomes of the University Senate.
- Objectives are taken from the GenEd section of UMM's Catalog
- Outcomes of capstones – some are addressed, some are not
- Can find the seven Senate outcomes embedded in the core values and student outcomes of Dr. Contant's campus presentation.
- A member asked if we have the NSSE results, Helsper replied that we will receive the results in the fall. The member said that we should look at the NSSE results, noting the report continues to show that most students say that they don't have enough opportunities to communicate orally. The member said we should not toss around the word 'orally', and opposes throwing in words to solve it. The member noted that we say a lot of things about oral communication that we do not say about written communication. Courses designated as providing oral instruction need to be assessed.

- Discussed S Courses – Required public speaking instruction. A member said it is unfair to assess students on things we have not taught. A member noted that if we went to S Courses, Public Speaking will be a requirement, and said there are financial implications.
- A member said the difference between informative and persuasive speaking is vitally important, and is lacking on this campus; we lack faculty to teach it, and supports stronger a emphasis on communication; and understands why it is important to keep it vague, but it must be assessed. Togeas said the ASLC response to the subcommittee report should comment on the long-standing problem of the speaking component of general education.
- ALSC discussed the category of Social Responsibility and what that ambiguous phrase might imply. The college ought not to be in the business of shaping opinions. Perhaps the intention was to refer to good citizenship or to having an awareness of our interdependence.
- Discussion in regards to Interdisciplinary Studies. A member feels that the Administration does not support Interdisciplinary Studies, noting some IS faculty have left, but not been replaced.
- The term interdisciplinary seemed to be too restrictive; multidisciplinary seems better. A member said he wants people to understand different modes of inquiry, whether or not they are interdisciplinary. Another noted that some majors benefit from the way GedEd is set up, whereas others are harmed. A member said he feels that one of the issues is the pressure to graduate in four years, the Administration is adamant about it.
- Need to look more carefully at what learning outcomes are and how they are linked to GenEd requirements.
- Need for stronger extra-curricular atmosphere that promotes the learning outcomes.
- Need to look at the assessment component. Can a learning outcome be assessed? The requirement that students “master a body of knowledge” overstates the depth requirement of the BA program.
- Discussed learning components. State the outcome in a number of ways or is it more realistic to state as improving/developing student knowledge and skills. Identify, solve problems – can that be assessed? Need to consider how worded and the implication for assessment. A member asked if assessment has to show that students have reached learning outcome thresholds; Helsper said we need to show improvement
- Togeas said we need to expand, increase, and broaden student’s development, and it is important to put it in a way that can be assessed.
- Critical thinking skills need to be taught in every course. The report seems to imply that they appear only in the First Year Seminar.

Togeas said members raised many good points today, and asked for volunteers to put statements together that embody today’s discussion. Bezanson and Togeas agreed to work on this, and will schedule a meeting time.

Helsper said the report by Subcommittee on Proposed Learning Outcomes was discussed at the November 15, 2007 Curriculum Committee Meeting, copies of the minutes were distributed to the ASLC members.

The ASLC will meet on Thursday, May 1 at 8:00 AM in the Prairie Lounge.

Meeting adjourned at 9:00 AM.