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Assessment of Student Learning

University of Minnesota, Morris

DATE: April 24, 2009

SUBJECT: Assessment of Student Learning Committee Minutes

PRESENT: Michael O'Reilly (chair), Julia Dabbs, Julie Eckerle, Nancy Helsper, Tom Johnson, Kristin Lamberty, Matthew Privratsky, and Laura Thoma.

ABSENT: (minute taker is not sure who was not here)

MINUTES: recorded by Kristin Lamberty

The meeting began at 2:30 PM in the Humanities conference room (HUM 112).

ASLC Minutes 12/11/08

O'Reilly asked for approval of the ASLC Minutes dated December 11, 2008. Motion (Johnson, Dabbs) to approve the minutes; minutes unanimously approved with corrections that were recorded by O'Reilly.

Reports from subcommittees

GenEd Subcommittee report:

Julie Eckerle (convener), Tom Johnson, Laura Thoma, Kristin Lamberty

Eckerle presented a final report from the Gen Ed Assessment subcommittee. A summary report was distributed. We discussed several of the concerns of the subcommittee at the ASLC meeting.

There was discussion about stating the gen ed goals developmentally versus in a way that is measurable with a "threshold" of some kind. Individual progress is harder to measure than a threshold. There was concern in the subcommittee and it was further discussed in the ASLC meeting about how the goals should be stated to address the conflict between these different approaches.

The subcommittee had been concerned about the wording about the survey responses and that they didn't map directly to the data sheets we had. Helsper had the actual survey, and it does match (it just didn't match our samples, which must have been older).

One concern was that the surveys might not be capturing students' experience of a gen ed (maybe they don't remember if they take the survey three years after the course). We discussed ways of conducting the survey that might help (at the end of a course rather than senior year, for example) or ways of breaking down the questions so that people can rate based on specific parts of a given gen ed category's stated goals.

The onus of assessment is certainly on the disciplines and professors. We would like to see the gen ed goals be part of the course level assessment. The main points of the report and discussion are that there needs to be a gen ed committee to focus on this, that we need to wait until we have the discipline reports to understand how the gen ed is being assessed at the course and discipline level (and whether we have concerns about that), and that we need to continue to meet with Jeff Ratliff-Crain in the coming year to coordinate our efforts.

Apparently only two of our gen eds had goals and objectives last time NCA looked at our assessment. We still need to answer that criticism.

Recommend to the curriculum committee that they create an adjunct committee to focus on general education. One important distinction to clarify what we are asking: we have asked the disciplines to report on their assessment of meeting the general education goals, but the structure and goals seem to need revising. We will continue to help/assess the program. We are not the ones to do the other part. Our attempts to assess the assessment suggest that the goals need some revising. (Lamberty, Johnson)

Johnson pointed out that our NSSE report scores were very strikingly high in some areas, and that the self-reported scores on the gen ed survey were also suggesting that we're doing okay.

Academic Challenge subcommittee report:

Arne Kildegaard (convener), Matt Privratsky, Michael O'Reilly, Julia Dabbs

Principled component analysis of NSSE data was conducted by an MSAF student (Tom Vail) under guidance of Engin Sungur. There seems to be some connection between responses (synthesis – challenge) (hours studied – analyzing/synthesizing). The report/analysis tells us how closely related various responses were to each other. There may be some useful information we can find in the NSSE data if we can come up with good questions to ask or analyses to perform.

Privratsky pointed out that we don't necessarily know why there were connections between different categories, and that some of the questions on NSSE seem to be worded in ways that were perhaps somewhat "leading" or charged in some way, so the responses by students may be impacted by that.

What do we want to ask or remind disciplines to do in the line of assessment for the 2009-2010 academic year?

We discussed ideas about what needed to be passed on to disciplines now and concluded that the request sent in late February should be sent again, in particular because though some disciplines work on an annual report whether or not it is requested, not all of them explicitly focus on how they are assessing the ways in which students in their courses meet general education requirements that those courses are listed as fulfilling.

Lamberty suggested that the same email be sent in the fall as an early prompt to remind disciplines early in the academic year that an assessment report will be requested, and what it would ideally include. The committee seemed to recognize that this might be a good recommendation to make to next year's committee chair, but that we could not really charge next year's committee to do anything in particular.

Review of the 2009 Gen Ed Survey

Helsper prepared and shared a report highlighting especially interesting results from the 2009 Gen Ed Survey. We discussed some trends. For example, FL and ArtP seem to have a discrepancy between "achieved" and "importance", and CW seems to be seen as both "achieved" and "important".

<https://www.morris.umn.edu/committees/asl/gened2009/gened2009.html>

Meeting adjourned at 3:47 PM.