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Assessment of Student Learning minutes 01/29/ 1997

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DATE: January 29, 1997

SUBJECT: Minutes of the Sixth Meeting of the Task Force on Assessment of Students' Learning

PRESENT: Bert Ahern, Eric Bass, Jim Cotter, Edith Borchardt, Tom Johnson, Carol Marxen, Nancy Mooney, Engin Sungur

ABSENT: Eric Bauer, Nat Hart

Before the meeting began, a short time table for the assessment plan and two alternatives for an extended plan for assessment were handed out along with a chart to summarize the surveys that had been returned. Members of the TFASL had received copies of the Assessment of Students' Learning: Planning Exercise and Survey I a few days prior to the meeting.

Approval of minutes: The minutes from meeting # 5, January 21, will be discussed at the next meeting.

Discussion:

Report on Assessment of Students' Learning: Planning and Exercise and Survey 1

Engin Sungur explained the results of the survey by directing the task force's attention to a chart that was passed out at the beginning of the meeting. The chart summarized the four main parts of the survey: mission, objective, expected outcome, and the timeline (tool). A little more than one half of all the surveys were returned, and they showed that many disciplines had already implemented, or are in the process of implementing, many of the things NCA wants. Of the surveys that had not been returned, most were having problems due to logistics or were confused as to what the survey wanted. There still seemed to be some confusion between the learning objectives and the expected outcome on the survey. Since many of the disciplines have already been doing assessments, the next step is to start communicating the information that is being gathered to NCA and to other disciplines.

There was also discussion on ways to show that students are learning the material in their major. The pros and cons of maintaining student portfolios were discussed at length, including whether something as confidential as a student portfolio could be used in the assessment process. It was mentioned that although individual student portfolios are confidential, collectively they reflect how well the discipline is achieving its educational goals. Mandatory testing versus voluntary testing was discussed, but there was little support for either method. Two parts of NCA requirements that still need to be worked on are the Common Course and General Education requirements. It was brought up once again that hopefully the standing committee would keep a record of the assessment data from each discipline so other people and disciplines could see what is going on.

Timetable

While most of the surveys showed that people were comfortable with the mission level, some people had concerns with the timeline. They felt that the timeline was moving too quickly and was trying to incorporate too much in that short a time. Since the subtitle "Units Application Reports" under the Short Time Table sheet was ambiguous, it was suggested that it be changed to "Unit Implementation Reports." It was also decided that the TFASL would not send out a second survey for the different disciplines to fill out, but they would instead use just the first survey. After mid-February, programs would be asked to supplement their first survey with a report on how they use or plan to use the information gathered by their assessment activity. Overall, the timetable looked good and Alternative I and II were easily understood and concise.

There was discussion about the Institutional Mission here at Morris, and why it seems to get shorter and more concise while other schools are making their missions longer. Some disciplines seemed to have trouble with relating the mission statements to student learning. It was suggested that the Resources and Planning Committee should be aware of that. At

the next meeting of the TFASL, the plan will be looked at once more before it goes to the Campus Assembly.

To be discussed at the next TFASL meeting:

- 1) last look at the assessment plan
- 2) budgetary needs
- 3) decide when to take the report to the Assembly

submitted by Julie Brotzler