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Assessment of Student Learning

University of Minnesota, Morris

DATE: Monday, September 17, 2001

SUBJECT: Assessment of Student Learning Committee Minutes

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

ABSENT: Nick Maxwell, Reid LeBeau

The meeting began at 3:00 PM in the Moccasin Flower room.

Lopez began the meeting with introductions of all committee members. The minutes for the ASL Meeting dated April 30, 2001 were distributed for review. O'Keefe moved to approved the minutes, seconded by Page. The minutes were unanimously approved. Lopez ask the committee if there were any additions to the agenda. Page asked to be added to the agenda to discuss the Education plans for assessment. O'Keefe made a motion to approve the agenda with the addition. The motion was seconded by Mooney, and the agenda was unanimously approved.

Lopez summarized the accomplishments of the committee from last year. The GenEd Electronic survey was put in place last spring for the graduating seniors. Lopez said that we had a fantastic response - 90 people responded on very late notice. Mooney corrected that number, saying that it would be slightly lower, because a few students responded several times. Mooney noted that she would use the first response only for the report. The GenEd survey tracks what the students have learned from GenEd courses. The results will be compiled and evaluated this year. O'Keefe said he would send the URL for the GenEd Survey to all committee members to view the survey. Lopez said that the students were given a \$5.00 coupon from the bookstore for completing the survey.

Lopez discussed the Unit Assessment sub-committee. She said that the committee tried to streamline the process of assessment. Lopez sent out a memo to discipline coordinators last year asking for information about what type of capstone project, senior seminar course, or research-orientated course, etc. that each unit was using. She said that she had a good response. 100% of the responses had either a capstone or a research related course. Lopez said she would send this memo out again this year to the few disciplines who did not respond before.

Lopez said that a few committee members had planned to attend a conference on Assessment in Fargo last spring, but were unable to attend because of flooding. Committee members will have a chance to attend a conference on Assessment in Minneapolis on November 16th and 17th of this year.

Lopez noted that the electronic portfolio software is becoming more important to the all-university community and we should look more closely into using it as a tool of assessment. Portfolio is a way for students to keep papers, projects and other electronic media in one place and to allow others to view a certain piece of that work when given permission. Representatives from the Twin Cities campus will train in interested faculty and staff in the next couple of months and Lopez will also offer training during the IT Fair later this semester.

GenEd Survey

O'Keefe discussed the GenEd survey. He said that there was a lot of discussion on how to assess GenEd courses.

Mooney, Sungur, and O'Keefe served on this committee. The GenEd survey was for exiting seniors, and a standard set of questions were asked for each of the GenEd requirements. However, extra targeted questions were added for the historical, human diversity, and mathematical/symbolic reasoning requirements. Mooney is compiling the results of the survey, she said there were approximately 83 responses, some students had answered 4 times. The committee discussed what they should do with the results, what can we learn from the results, how the results should be publicized, and how to refine the survey to put it into the system for next year. O'Keefe said that the survey is on-line, and that the URL would be sent to all committee members. Mooney said that she has 30 questionnaires done. Page asked if questions could be directed to more specific areas to assess, assessment of student attitudes is not a direct measure of student learning. The committee discussed if a direct measure of student learning could be done by using writing samples from the freshman year and comparing with senior year writing samples, but the problem is who would be responsible to grade, etc. Johnson noted that it seemed that we were struggling with the same issues as they did 3 years ago when he served on the committee. The main criticism was not having something in place for assessment. O'Keefe said that the GenEd survey is in place, and can be refined as necessary. O'Keefe said that we could gather quantitative measures, such as incoming scores (ACT) and compare it with the GRE outgoing scores of each student, but there are privacy concerns with this. Schwaller said that we must have something in place, but keep it simple. He said that the more complex, the less results will be received. The results can be used to further refine how you measure it or how you teach. Lopez noted that last year we tried to do too much, this year we will try to streamline even more.

Unit Assessment

Lopez said that Unit Assessment is difficult to streamline. She said the committee needs to develop general unit discipline guidelines to help with assessment. The subcommittee should develop this set of guidelines and distribute them to the coordinators of each discipline by the end of the semester. Volunteers from our committee would be available to help with assessment if necessary. It was agreed that we should go ahead with the capstone project assessment as something that every discipline could assess giving us a uniform assessment tool. Schwaller asked if it was in the handbook about the capstone project. Johnson said that the committee should get an idea of how the capstone experience is used by the disciplines and how the disciplines track the performance of students over the years. Lopez said that the committee should develop a list of suggestions that disciplines could use, if they wished, in their assessment discussions.

Mooney said that Gary Donovan should be invited to a meeting this fall to discuss campus assessment. The committee discussed different issues of campus assessment, such as;

- What are we doing, and how are we doing?
- What type of services should we offer to disciplines?
- Which surveys should we use?

Schwaller said we should be using more surveys on the campus level and also some national surveys of student engagement.

Page discussed the Education Division plans for assessment. She discussed the NCATE Program, and said that this is pilot study of assessment. Timelines for this program are Spring 2002 and the 2002-2003 school year. She discussed issues such as setting up a data base, capstone projects, and electronic portfolios. She said that they don't have a good way of systemizing the results, they would like to do more with the results. Schwaller said that the portfolio system can be designed to include the needed information. Page offered to distribute copies of the NCATE to the committee members.

Lopez suggested having a new sub-committee to look at unit assessment since many of last year's members are no longer on the committee. The following sub-committees were formed.

Unit Assessment Sub-committee

(Dian Lopez, Michelle Page, Tim Soderberg)

It was suggested that the sub-committee should try to find common ground with all disciplines in order to have at least one item (capstone/research/seminar course) which can be assessed by all disciplines. The committee will draft general guidelines for accomplishing this assessment goal. Disciplines can, of course, assess any other areas of learning, but this

streamlined goal will give us one common set of data from each discipline. Simple checklists can help make this task easier.

GenEd Sub-Committee

(Tim O'Keefe, Nancy Mooney)

Results of the GenEd survey will be compiled. The committee will decide on how the results of the GenEd survey can be used and discuss how to refine the GenEd survey as necessary.

Lopez offered to send a note to the student committee members reminding them of the meeting. She said that it would be desirable for the ASL committee to meet at least once a month this fall with the sub-committees meeting in between, and reporting back at the monthly meeting. It was decided that the next meeting would be held, Monday, October 22, 2001 at 3:00 -4:30 PM.

Meeting adjourned at 4:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Pederson