

Learning Assessment Committee Meeting
Friday, March 7, 2008
1-2:30 pm in T-750

Present: Vina Cera, Cheli Fossum, Evelyn Lord, Mae Frances Moore, Karolyn van Putten, Wandra Williams, Kathy Williamson

1. Updates:

Student Services: Cheli met with Jim Bracy, VP of Student Services to update what progress has been made in his area. A deadline of 3/14 was set, and to date, besides counseling, several sections have turned in outcomes and assessment plans.

Departments: very few depts. have turned in their SLOs, assessments, reports to date, and this is cause for concern. It's difficult to know how to overcome this lag, especially in the light of the current burdens hanging over faculty. Cheli will consult with the VPI to strategize about how to get priorities in line with looming accreditation demands. Do we get Deans involved, use a carrot? A stick? We have to get the urgency across.

GE Outcomes: were approved by the Curriculum Cte. on 2/26/08. They were on the agenda for the Faculty Senate meeting, 3/4/08, but were tabled due to lack of time. They will be addressed at the next Senate meeting, 3/18/08.

2. Prof. Development Day Report:

Several people showed up and all worked and developed their SLOs.

An examination of some SLOs and assessments turned up some disturbing facts about the 'quality' of said SLOs and assessment methods and the attitudes, especially of P/Ters, regarding the consequences of the results and possible threats to their positions. We had thought this issue was basically resolved when brought up way back when we first approached the issue of outcomes. However the fears remain inured about poor results, and because of this, the dilemma of whether to make expectations low for good results, or maintain higher standards for shakier ones. The fact is that students are allowed into courses for which they are ill prepared, and so are set up to fail or do poorly.

Some discussion threads:

- the quality of several assessment methods, like multi-choice and check points, were of grave concern
- need to tighten up prerequisite system
- need for communication across disciplines in order to ascertain what are the necessary prereq's for courses following next in the learning path. For example, Kathy Williamson described how, in order to cover all the material in her Algebra text, she skipped the section on scientific notation, because she thought that subject would be covered in the subsequent courses. On later discussing this with science teachers, she found that the notation was not taught, and so students did badly here. As a result of this communication, she reintroduced the notation section.

3. Examination of the Cabrillo SLO analysis/dialogue forms:

- Except for some minor changes, we accepted the forms as a model.

- On discussing how the forms helped us look at assessment, both from the individual course, and the dept. areas, we veered off on a discussion of adult pedagogy:
- Having profound knowledge in the area taught is not the only necessary ingredient for successful student outcomes. Knowing HOW to teach is equally important. College teachers are not trained in pedagogy, and also, those coming from K-12 backgrounds, are not trained in adult education methodology.
- it was suggested that a series of workshops be conducted by successful faculty, to tweak our delivery, and to pass along best practices to the rest of us. We thought to make it mandatory, possibly in the same way that Flex Day credits are mandatory. However, this brings up the whole contract issue and PFT involvement – heavy, but needing to be addressed.
- this raised the possibility of special classes, workshops, or preview sessions. Subjects like ‘How to Study for Specific Subjects,’ ‘Sneak Previews,’ in the middle or end of semester, where prerequisites and necessary skills are outlined and even tested, for the following courses along the learning path, ‘Orientation Sessions,’ to formalize the career pathway.
- 60% of our students have basic skills issues, yet 60% of our resources are not dedicated to this problem. We need to direct more of our resources to this sector if these students are to succeed. The High School Exit exams have dumped many ill prepared students into our system, and we are not dealing efficiently with them. Hopefully, new Programs like Gateways and Career Pathways will ease the situation, but that’s yet to be determined.

4. Purpose Statement:

We successfully came up with a purpose statement for our committee:

“To stimulate a culture of ongoing instructional improvement using assessment to facilitate student success”

5. Discussing logistics of assessing GE Outcomes:

This agenda item was tabled for the next meeting on 3/21/08.