

**Learning Assessment Committee Meeting**  
**Friday, March 21, 2008**  
**1-2:30 pm in T-750**

Present: Vina Cera, Cheli Fossum, David Mitchell, Mae Frances Moore, Louis Quindlen, Adrienne Riley, Karolyn van Putten, Wandra Williams, Kathy Williamson

**1. Updates:**

Student Services: are responding and to date, several sections have turned in assessment plans and the Dean's secretary is helping to push results.

Departments: still slow to date, a continuing cause for concern. The co-chair's consultation with the VPI to strategize about how to get priorities in line with looming accreditation demands, bore fruit in a special luncheon Chair meeting held yesterday, the 20<sup>th</sup> of March. The need for more SLOs, assessments was again emphasized, a lively discussion and question/answer session was held and it's to be hoped that more responses will forthcoming as a result. A survey regarding the dept's assessment status was passed out.

GE Outcomes: were approved by the Faculty Senate meeting on 3/18/08, but were unable to be approved by the College Council, since a quorum was not available at the 3/19/08 meeting. Cheli will take it up again at the April date.

**2. Logistics for Assessing GE Outcomes:**

The discussion centered around what steps we should take to get the assessment process going with greater momentum.

- tracking was one of the methods brought up. It was noted that CSU keeps track of English outcomes by college, also compares transfer to 'native' students, so possibly we could use this data to track how Laney students do in English once they leave the college. We could also check/validate our own system of prereqs to see if those courses using English 1A as a prereq actually met the assessments and prepared students for the next step up.

- we need to consult with bonafide researchers who could help us devise the kinds of data needed to make these assessments.

- the problem of how to deal with assessing the breadth of material covered in the Humanities area was discussed. We concluded that a common rubric could be designed, that would be fulfilled by a paper, project, performance, field trip, etc. Instructors could formulate connections to their own discipline's focus. Depts. could be encouraged to participate in this, because it could also be used as an assessment tool for their own individual courses.

- We discussed using some survey questions for assessment of GE outcomes to supplement the direct evidence we'll be gathering by looking at assignments.

- how to deal with sample data was brainstormed. It was pointed out that the accred. Cte. wanted to see actual samples of student work. Cheli thought that we should concentrate on GE samples as opposed to individual course samples. It was reemphasized that all courses mapped to GE outcomes should have them embedded in their own CORs. If we collect only a few – then which? the best ones? a random sample? a sample of work at each level of achievement along with the % of students attaining the grades? Where and in what format would we keep them?

Rather than floundering in the dark, we decided to have the VPI (liaison w/accred cte) ask the cte. what exactly they require as to numbers, number of depts., etc.

We also need to acquire a printer, copier, scanner and media for these purposes.

- though the LAC has been thoroughly indoctrinated into the need for SLO/Assessments, there still remains a substantial percentage of the faculty who are resistant, or who haven't even made the connection, and hence the poor response to date. There are many who feel that if they outwait it, it'll go away, and there's probably a majority who haven't taken it up for lack of time, resources, etc. Using the 'stick' approach is not an option. So we have to find some way to impinge that neither are excuses, as valid as they are, because ultimately, they will lead to losing jobs through loss of accreditation. We haven't necessarily failed in our outreach to faculty – it's just that the message needs to be continually repeated. Not only is there constant turnover, but the energy of those cooperating must also be kept up.

- Some brainstorming of the issue; flyers like "SLOs, Accreditation, and YOU!"  
A newsletter being put out by Pres. Chong on the self study will be a good place to post items.

- Rather than continuing the brown bags and workshops that were poorly attended, cte. members could go out to dept. meetings to talk to faculty. They could interact with the individual instructors instead of having all the information and directives be filtered through the already heavily overloaded chairs. We need to find out the schedule of these meetings and ask to be placed on their agenda.

- Since time is such a bottleneck to the process, a special Flex Day devoted to workshops, and/or a retreat was discussed. The concern for the mandatory Flex process was that those who haven't participated yet would still not participate. A greater draw perhaps, would be a retreat, for at least a minimum of 4 hrs, with food and other appeals, that could be more receptive. Of course, some sort of budget would have to be garnered.

- We could target key, representative individuals to participate.

**3. Planning college-wide dialogue** about assessment results, possible changes/improvements:

Meryl Siegal was invited to join our discussion on the basis of her experience with working with faculty on learning issues, via a Carnegie grant.

Points raised:

- she also found much resistance of faculty to dialogue and change
- a prevailing prejudice was that many felt this was a political issue brought on by NCLB (No Child Left Behind)
- she suggested that perhaps we should go in for some more 'catchy' terms – that SLOs/Assessments was developing into a big turn-off
- found in her experience that instructors had a hard time in trying to actually deal with the concept of what students actually learned – perhaps this is an offshoot of the fact that college instructors are hired only on the basis of their knowledge in a specific discipline, and that their teaching skills are 'nil.' However, even though the process of learning takes place over a larger duration than the semester, we are still constrained to assess the amount of learning at a given time period.
- It would help if instructors understood that if a clear set of SLOs and assessment methods were distributed at the beginning of a semester, retention could be improved, because then those students who were not sufficiently prepared to handle the class content would be able to see upfront what the class entailed, and would therefore be able to make better choices for themselves.
- Meryl made the point that we're up against the difficult barrier of resistance to change. Many instructors are threatened by any blip in their years-old routine.
- data that was collected isn't really being used. The information could be used to diagnose strengths and weaknesses, identify core weaknesses, and look at common themes as opposed to looking at whose students did what. This could be very helpful.