Minutes
Assessment Oversight Committee
October 23, 2006

Present: Carol Sue Butts (Provost), Shane Drefcinski (Assessment coordinator), Peter Hadorn (LAE), Mohaninder Gill (EMS), Annie Kinwa-Muzinga (BILSA), Amanda Trewin (BILSA, APC Representative), Carlos Wiley (Student Affairs Representative)

Guests: John Mirth, Helen Reynolds, Dawn Drake

Absent: Tom Lo Guidice (LAE), Qi Yang (EMS), (Faculty Senate Representative), (Undergraduate Curriculum Commission Representative), (Student Senate Representative)

1. Approval of October 9, 2006 Minutes.
   Moved by Mohan Gill, 2nd by Carlos Wiley

2. Announcements
   HLC discussion to be added to agenda of next meeting.
   HLC visit scheduled for Dec. 4-6, 2006.
   HLC documentation sent.
   Noted that UWP was the first university to send report with flash-drive.

3. John Mirth: Liberal Studies Outcomes Within Engineering
   Overview of report provided.
   Engineering program is accredited by ABET. New criterion set in 2000. Included requirement of teaching/evaluation of soft or professional skills. ABET has traditionally focused on teaching/evaluation of technical skills.

   Questions asked: How do we assess professional skills? How do we assess whether or not helping students improve their professional skills.

   Goal: To incorporate professional skill building into four courses (Engineering Materials, Mechanical Systems Design, Computer-aided Engineering and Mechanism and Machines) already taught by Mirth. Mirth determined appropriate skills to focus on for each course. He considered methods to engage the student. Motivation often linked with grade/feedback. John would also need to provide feedback about success at professional skills activities.

   In Engineering Materials, students were asked to write lab reports. Faculty provided feedback. Students continued working/revising until lab report was A quality.
In Mechanical Systems Design, students were asked to design a sofa bed—something both functional and comfortable. A performance review for students was added. This was a self-reflection assessment.

In Computer-aided Engineering, Mirth had a hard time inserting professional skill development into curriculum. Didn’t get to professional skills due to high content (technical skills) in course.

Mechanism and Machines is currently being taught. Seems that this course is appropriate for professional skills development.

When asked whether other chemical engineering faculty were ready to follow his lead, Mirth indicated that he was more interested in assessment than others. ABET accreditation scheduled for next week. ABET feedback might influence activities of other faculty. Advisory council/employers have been indecisive about need for development/assessment of professional skills.

4. Helen Reynolds: Online Academic Advising
   Campus-wide academic advising survey was conducted in spring 2005. Plan to do follow-up advising survey in spring 2007. Twenty-six percent response rate.

   Assessed importance and satisfaction as perceived by students. Hot button items were determined. Hot button items were defined as those where there was a big discrepancy between importance and satisfaction.

   Overall, 65% indicated that advising is great. Seniors seemed less satisfied than freshmen. This has implications for alumni relations. Seniors were most dissatisfied with advisors’ knowledge of general education and major requirements.

   Faculty (at meeting) concerned that advising meetings scheduled when faculty are in class. Reynolds indicated that there are several forums scheduled each semester to minimize conflicts.

   Reynolds also indicated that it is difficult to assess how well we are doing compared to other campuses since very few do campus-wide assessment of advising.

5. Dawn Drake: Noel-Levitz Assessment of On-line Learning
   Goal of assessment: To determine how UWP compared to other institutions. To determine whether or not current internal assessment is valid.

   Assessment used to determine what’s important to the student and how well do we meet that expectation.
Feedback from assessment will be used to modify marketing materials for the on-line programs. Survey allowed UWP to identify strengths relative to other on-line colleges. For example, survey indicated that UWP provides excellent advising for on-line students. Feedback from assessment also used to determine whether or not things we are doing are adding to the program’s strengths. For example, found that more options for payment are really important to on-line students.

Top strengths:
Reduced turn-around time for requests. Automated email response makes students aware that there request/question is being processed.

Weaknesses:
Students dissatisfied that UWP didn’t offer tutoring services to on-line students. In response to this need, an opportunity grant was writing requesting funds to develop tutoring services. Tutoring services are now available but students aren’t taking advantage of the opportunity. This has had no affect on the drop rate.

The survey also identified areas where students were less satisfied but for which UWP has no/little control. For example, students are dissatisfied with the lack of financial aid. However, because these are graduate programs, grants are not available. These are federal guidelines. Students are able to attain loans. Distance education will work to make this clear up front. Further, plan to work to increase scholarship opportunities for on-line students. These are presently not available because scholarships are limited to full-time students.

Survey compared UWP to competitors in distance education. These were mostly technical colleges. It was noted that UWP faired well, especially considering that technical colleges usually out-compete 4-year colleges in service areas.

Concluded that internal assessment valid as it correlated well with the Noel-Levitz assessment.

6. Adjournment.
Carlos Wiley moved to adjourn.
5:10 p.m.