Minutes
Assessment Oversight Committee
January 22, 2006

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

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

1. Approval of December 11, 2006 Minutes.
   Need to modify typo (replace CRP with CPR)
   Move to approve by Peter Hadorn. Seconded by Annie Kinwa-Muzinga.

2. Announcements
   Carol Sue says “welcome back” to faculty and staff.

   Faculty senate will discuss quality of education at UWP at their meeting on 1/23/07 at 4:00 p.m. The discussion should include issues related to low entrance requirements, remedial classes and teaching students to learn. You’re invited to attend if this is a topic for which you feel strongly.

3. Gen Ed Assessment Reports: Social Sciences and Physical Education
   Shane Drefcinski met separately with social science faculty and psychology faculty to discuss the social science general education requirement. In the submitted minutes, the comments contributed by social science faculty are in normal text while those contributed by psychology are in bold type.

   Social science felt that their first learning objective was unclear and proposed a modification. Psychology, on the other hand, felt that the proposed modification was too restrictive and therefore preferred to leave the objective as is. Both programs felt that students master learning objective #2 by taking courses in their programs. While psychology was fairly confident that students master learning objective #2, social science felt that perhaps only their best students actually master #3.

   Concerns that were brought up by the programs are weaknesses in writing skills among students. They felt that UWP may not be providing adequate remedial writing courses. Further they reported a bimodal distribution of scores (rather than normal distribution.) There are very bright students scoring As and Bs and weaker students scoring Ds and Fs with few students scoring in the C range. They also expressed a concern about graduation rates.
The social science and psychology programs suggested that as their course of action, they will add research aspects into their general education courses.

Discussion focused on the quality of education at UWP as well as the quality of students entering UWP.

Carol Sue suggested that general education should be readdressed. One suggestion was that general education courses should be distributed throughout the 4-6 years that a student is enrolled at UWP rather than concentrated at the beginning of the student’s academic career. It was also noted that maturity level sometimes predicts how well a student will do in some courses. By waiting to take these classes until later, the students could benefit. This could be encouraged through academic advising sessions. It could also be encouraged by making junior-standing a prerequisite for some courses. This committee does recommend that general education courses be staggered.

Carlos reported that recent trends in perceived lower quality students may be related to ‘No Child Left Behind’. Age-appropriateness is being stressed in the K-12 system. As a result, students may be being advanced (social promotion) even if they have not mastered grade-appropriate concepts. This may account for some of the deficiencies that we are being presented within our students.

Since some students are admitted with writing and math deficiencies, remedial courses are common. The committee would like to know if remedial courses at UWP are providing the background that the students need. Are courses allowing these students to catch up to their peers? Peter did point out that writing skills need to be continually practiced and that faculty should not assume that because students have taken English 1130 and 1230 that they will be proficient in all styles of writing. He feels that students need to be writing in courses across the university curriculum and that many courses should include a writing component. Shane indicated that all departments/programs identify writing as a learning outcome.

Carol Sue also asked whether or not we should change the make-up of general education. What are we trying to accomplish through general education requirements? Further, we should make sure that students are educated with regard to why we have general education requirements. Annie suggested that showing the student how a general education course will be beneficial for the student in their future career will help motivate students in general education courses. Peter suggested that general education doesn’t need to or shouldn’t need to tie directly with career goals but rather that general education is about becoming a well-rounded individual.

Shane also met with physical education faculty to discuss the physical education general education requirements. The physical education faculty felt that they are successful at their learning outcomes. Upon completion of the requirement,
students are more attentive to their health. They also fell that through their
courses, they are able to clear up health-related misconceptions. They noted that
students are seeking advice/help at Student Health Services in areas that they
study in the physical education courses (STDs, cholesterol).

They are concerned that students lack urgency related to living a healthy lifestyle.
This is attributed to their immaturity/age. Physical education faculty are also
concerned that they do not have adequate space or equipment. Carlos indicated
that Student Affairs has also identified the expansion of the field house as a
priority.

4. Discuss focus of Assessment Activity Fund (AAF) grants
Carol Sue indicated that we have not received feedback from the Higher Learning
Commission as yet. Despite this, there were several areas on which the AAF
grants could focus. Committee member asked to consider possible focus areas.
Some areas include:
   a) How is diversity integrated into the curriculum?
   b) How is service learning/civic engagement integrated into the curriculum?
   c) How is international education/ethnic studies integrated into the
      curriculum with regard to travel courses?
   d) How are a-c assessed?
   e) Assessment of remedial courses.
We haven’t made a decision with regard to which areas should be elicited. It was
noted that we would give priority to specific areas but that grants investigating
other areas will also be accepted.

5. Adjournment.
Meeting adjourned at 5:10 p.m.