Assessment Oversight Committee
Minutes
November 26, 2007
4 p.m. 320 Brigham

Present: Carol Sue Butts (Provost), Ben Collins (Faculty Senate Representative), Shane Drefcinski (Assessment coordinator, Undergraduate Curriculum Commission Representative), Peter Hadorn (LAE), Marge Karsten (BILSA), Tom Lo Guidice (LAE), Matthew Roberts (EMS), and Amanda Trewin (BILSA, APC Representative)

Absent: Mohan Gill (EMS), Carlos Wiley (Student Affairs Representative), (Student Senate Representative)

Guests: Helen Reynolds, George Smith, Jennifer Mandel, Joanne Wilson

1. Approve minutes of 11/12/07
   Peter moved to approve.

2. Announcements.

   Members were provided with a schedule of a number of meetings that Carol Sue sits on as ex officio that will be moving their meetings to Ullsvik Hall in January 2008. AOC will meet in the Foundation/Alumni Conference room.

   The General Education Task force will have their first meeting this Thursday (11/29/07). Agendas will be posted on the General Education website.


   Jennifer redeveloped assessment techniques for a large general education course. World Regional Geography fulfills the International education and the Social Science General Education requirements. Jennifer chose this course in part because she had taught it continuously since being employed by UWP.

   As such, it is a high demand course. In Fall 2006, the course served over 200 students. In terms of assessment, large enrollment classes typically rely on multiple choice exams. Jennifer didn’t want to rely exclusively on multiple choice exams because she felt that this was a disservice to students because some students cannot articulate well on multiple choice exams and a disservice to the General Education requirements because multiple choice tests assess primarily course content and not the development of any critical skills needed to be successful in college. Jennifer’s mission was to do assessment that will enhance skill development and allow students multiple ways to demonstrate knowledge while not getting bogged down in grading herself. She chose to incorporate other activities in addition to tests.
Students were required to complete Journaling activities. For this assignment, students would find a newspaper article about the country of study. Students would then read and summarize article and relate the article to course content.

Students were also required to complete three short papers related to course content. For example, in the course students learn about the uneven geography of economic development. In a paper, students discussed how we define development. In these papers, students were required to compare and contrast.

Jennifer decided to use a different approach with map exercises. Traditionally, students were required to memorize locations. In this activity, students were provided with clues about a location and then they would choose the correct location from a provided list. This allows students to link places with world events. It was noted that this would still require that students be able to identify places on a blank map.

Debates were another method of assessment. For the debates, students were allowed to choose the topic but were not allowed to choose the side (pro/con). It was noted that the students hated this activity.

These modifications did provide more regular feedback about grades to the students. It also provided Jennifer with good feedback concerning the students’ understanding of content.

Multiple choice exams continued to be one form of assessment in most sessions. Jennifer noted that in courses where regular exams were not administered, students made comments such as “If you want us to attend class, you need to give exams.”

It was also noted that there was a fair bit of plagiarism found in some papers.

This semester Jennifer decided to remove the papers and reinstitute exams, map exercises and active learning.

Jennifer also included more formative assessment as participation and attendance. An example would be a brief one paragraph writing exercise. This gives Jennifer the chance to see what they have learned and allows student to assess what they have learned. This works best if points are based on whether or not activity was completed rather than correct. Based on this activity, Jennifer can adjust lecturing.

It was noted that grading has been a challenge. She knew that was an issue going in but felt strongly about not accomplishing pedagogical goals.

Peter asked “What do colleagues think of project?” Response was that this requires too much time grading. Jennifer noted that journaling and papers were dropped due to grading times not because they weren’t successful for students. Unfortunate that worthwhile activities dropped due to time constraints.
It was also noted that some faculty don’t feel comfortable grading writing. Jen does have undergraduate degree in English Lit which she admitted likely gives her edge over other faculty in other programs.

Marge asked “why did students hate debate?” Students may have felt that it wasn’t a “real” debate. By formalizing as debate, students were less engaged. Informally they do still seem to enjoy debating. Debating also works easier with smaller, advanced classes.


They are still analyzing data. Same survey was administered in 2005. ACES are looking for overall advising campus climate rather than at individual advisors or departments.

They had a response rate of ~20% of the entire student populations. They were most interested in importance versus satisfaction from the student perspective. Hot button issues are those that have most disparity between importance and satisfaction. Also interested in analyzing differences based on year in college and by college (BILSA, EMS, LAE). Finally, they looked at comments to try to determine whether there are trends. By comparing 2005 to 2007 data, they are trying to determine whether we have made progress. There should be college-specific workshops in the spring (08).

Carol Sue was very concerned about differences among different colleges. “Why are LAE numbers so much higher than the other two colleges?”

Tom asked “why don’t you provide data to individual departments?” Helen indicated concern about sample size. Departments should survey their own students if interested in assessment. Department feedback wasn’t the intent of this study.

5. Adjournment-5:05