University Assessment Committee  
Wednesday, April 2, 2014  
1:30-3:30 p.m.  
Student Union Room 3018  

Attendees: Barbara Walvoord (BW), Barb Kopp Miller (BKM), Marlene Porter (MP), Drew Scales (DS), Laurie Mauro (LM), Aimee Mendelsohn (AM), Connie Shriner (CoSh), Anthony Edgington (AE), Stephen Schissler (SS), Ken Davis (KD), Chris Roseman (CR), Marilynne Wood (MW), Susan Pocotte (SP), Sue Ann Hochberg (SAH), Holly Monsos (HM), Barbara Schneider (BS), John Barrett (JB), Emily Hickey (EH), Cynthia Spitler (CS), Noela Haughton (NH), Llew Gibbons (LG)  

UAC CHAIR REPORT  

Presentation Schedule Adjustments  

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Blackboard Outcomes  

BKM – Does anyone have any additional programs for they’d like to suggest for the Blackboard Learning Outcomes pilot?  

CR – Yes, the Higher Education Program would like to be in the pilot.  

JB – Also, we sent group for assessment training at HLC in St. Charles a little while back. The people that went found it very useful. The more peers we have that are comfortable doing assessment, the better. We are going to continue sending groups until budgets run out so if you represent a unit that could benefit, let us know (CoCA group will go next time)
BKM – Also for the upcoming HLC visit, I will be Criterion leader 4, CS will do Criterion 3. We will go to HLC next week and we may be reaching out to all of you as we write pieces especially for assessment. Co-chairs for each criterion have already been picked, but haven’t populated the teams yet. There will be 5 criterion teams, if you’re interested tell JB and he’ll pass along to the leader.

OFFICE OF ASSESSMENT, ACCREDITATION, AND PROGRAM REVIEW

Alana is out until June 24

BARBARA WALVOORD

Suggestions University Process

BW - By the time we quit, we aim to have figured out how to make your job easier and more effective. Let’s start out by asking what concerns are about work of committee and whole campus scene for assessment; ongoing and for the upcoming HLC visit.

JB – One concern - struggle the UAC has with the calendar and deadlines for our assessment reports to be completed. We’ve talked about options or independent cycles for service units vs. academic programs.

BW – There is no real answer because everyone struggles. This process is very institution specific. So that needs to be considered in the context of larger issues and how to streamline your process.

KD – One concern – connection of assessment of student learning outcomes to resource allocation and how it’s not happening at UT. This is frustrating for the UAC liaison to see resources being pulled away from learning outcomes because of politics and other related things. So it is hard to motivate those involved in assessment when no legitimate change is happening.

BKM – One concern – HLC comments about the variety in the quality reports are being turned in pointing out that some take assessment seriously and some don’t. Some are cutting and pasting or turning in same form as last year; not raising assessment to a high level of importance.

LG – One concern – Service learning and student learning should support to each other; not as separate tracks

HM – As we redesign forms, service forms are really not that different than the academic form. I think it needs to be because forms are not speaking the language that service units would understand. It’s as if we’re taking student learning outcomes and adapting them to service units but it’s not working.

CoSh – One concern – frustration with the college. The college level assessment committee doesn’t seem to matter to anyone below or above. They put X in the box and submitted. Then they got feedback but because it’s not tied to anything else it seems to be effort just for the sake of getting done (Compliance as opposed to action).
BW – HLC noted that reviews conducted by liaisons were basically compliance reviews; but nothing else you can do because don’t have power, money, position to incentive; basically colleagues conducting compliance reviews; spending more time and more resource on that process than any other universities I’ve worked with.

MP – One concern – As a service unit liaison, I echo what service people are saying because it is very different than student learning outcomes. There needs to be a definite training or processes to help service unit people better understand what need to do.

BKM – Need to look at how we improve as UT over past 10 years; how do we fair from what’s going on across the United States from universities in comparison?

BW – UT is unexceptional; not at top and not at bottom; middle of the pack; ranging quality in the middle. I don’t know much about the reality behind the reports. UT has a system on paper that looks as though it might use data to use policy or budget decisions but doesn’t and that’s normal. UT’s general education system is way behind because you got a bi last time from HLC. Struggling with that system is normal but it doesn’t matter to HLC very much, especially whatever the courses are or whatever they’re called. If UT is always offering some general education courses, you always have to be assessing them. The UAC liaison is good practice but is an entirely normal process to have a separate general education committee that’s historically in charge of new general education course and undertaking the review of general education core curriculum but not conducting periodic assessment of general education courses.

JB – On the general education state side ... yes, we have issues with complying with state mandates but state mandates have been made clearer in the past 6 months. What we’re struggling with is the fighting of what appeared to be the mandate out of faculty not supporting it; own internal struggle of what is general education now and what it going to be at UT but the state adds a level.

BS – UT used to do Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) since it was a State of Ohio norm.

BW – CLA is not totally multiple choice but it is a standardized test. It takes a sample of students but not everyone and has different pieces (critical reasoning – reading and writing); make and argument/ break an argument; read text that argue about issue and answer questions about the way argument framed and assumptions; do piece of writing). CLA is partly scored by rubric and partly by machine. The outcome is used for the national percentile range for institutions because can use it comparatively on whether they improve. It is highly criticized and has loads of method issues; however, that doesn’t count for anything for them. The real question to answer is how do we know if students are doing their best work? CLA has lots of problems but part of the push for testing using CLA is to evaluate institutions and compare them with one another. CLA one of three tests that used to be an option within the Voluntary System of Accountability – state institutions signed up for. Some institutions administer CLA basically because they have to even though most have not found the information useful. It has too many problems and does not provide a clear way to demonstrate the validity of that test. Validity is a huge issue – how do we know that it measures
what our general education is actually teaching? Where’s the turn where we say general education has to teach these things? As long as you’re giving it why not take results and see what learn; use results combined with better information (triangulation of data).

JB – For freshman it is easy to use but it is very hard for senior to take which is a real challenge.

BW – What does this institution need to do to satisfy HLC?

1. **Reasonably consistent set of program assessment reports**
   a. EITHER binded together with Program Review
   b. OR as separate reports
      i. Short, consistent sample of what departments are doing for assessment (Show HLC and then clarify) Accessible to HLC on website
         1. Available on website for every program/service for HLC to review
      ii. Show current and future assessment action in a short and quick way; current forms are too long; peer review process is extremely labor intensive and not serving a streamline purpose
         1. Available on website for every program/service for HLC to review

2. **Way of assessing student learning in general education**
   a. Answer questions below when students complete general education requirements through assessment efforts:
      i. What did they learn?
      ii. How do you know?
      iii. What are you doing about it?
         1. Need to explain system to HLC; since started by mirroring the system used for each program about their general education offerings and asked to turn in this spring; UT has not yet fully worked out a plan with UAC and Faculty Senate Core Curriculum Committee
         2. MUST SIMPLIFY THE SYSTEM!!

3. **Institution wide system where information about student learning used for resource allocation and decision making at every level** (Program/Gen Ed/School or College/Institution)
   a. Need to demonstrate that UT policy and resource decisions are informed by good information about student learning (Not PERCEPTION; tie back to the data).

BW – Now, let’s talk about system by which you gather and review information about program assessment.

BW - UAC earned high praise from HLC for good reason – you are dedicated, smart, and highly motivated. The UAC has pushed the institution ahead and the peer review has been great – cross fertilization and peer to peer help. There is a lot to be said for your
work. The system has helped to make this whole thing a visible and demonstratively driven process.

BW – The UAC system of collecting reviews, aggregating and summarizing reports if well used will actually be passed on to inform decision at higher levels ------ however, one big problem is the enormous amount of time spent in what amounts to a compliance review, that’s separate from program review system and what lines flows from decision makers into departments and faculty. You have an entirely separate system and all you can do is measure compliance and I can’t say that’s great. Data should be used to plan for improvement and we should use resources to improve.

BW – Suggested models for UAC and UT to use:

**SUGGESTION ONE** – One page report of each program/service unit’s assessment process. (Not voluntary and it has to be high quality). Answer the following:

- Description of how program/service unit conducts its assessment. This is not the yearly data (Done once; possibly updated every year if necessary)
  1. Student Learning Outcomes/ Service Unit Outcomes (Only URL link; should already be listed on the program/service units website)
  2. How the assessment data is gathered
     - Direction assessment methods
     - Indirect assessment methods
  3. Process by which the information is considered and how it’s used to make decisions
- This information does no need to be reformulated every year; the UAC can send the link to each program/service unit asking if they have any updates, if not it stays the same.
  1. The yearly compliance role could be filled by a graduate assistant who review each report with a checklist to make sure they have the following elements
     - All program SLOS (URL to link – Links to departments where can find them to begin with)
     - Direct assessment methods
     - Indirect assessment methods with detail
     - Describe process by which information is considered by department

BW – Current process needs to be simplified. Head start by separating the instructions from the report, however, still needs to be more streamline and you need to pay attention to document design

LG – Is this a publicly accessible website?

BW - Keep it within the university (myUT portal) but it will not show data or anything currently working on

BW – However, every department should have a version of learning goals already on their own website; might be titled “what you can learn?”
KD – Lack of transparency about quality improvement is driving conversation talking about past two days; why not show we’ve achieved?

BW – validity to that and post weaknesses/ strengths

JB – Not sure I buy that public will be more understanding given The Blade but if we create it in a written format under Ohio Sunshine laws it can be accessed. This is just the nature of state we live in but we shouldn’t get too worked up about it.

**SUGGESTION TWO** - Process description mentioned as suggestion one can then become a part of program review.

BW – When program review is done right, it has consequences (what are your plans for the future and what are you going to do about this information). The internal and external results showcased in a report allow UAC liaisons to talk it over with deans/directors and central administration, positions that does drive resource allocation

BW – UT already has a process in place (program review and budgeting) that already uses information from areas so now we need to fold assessment of student learning into that process.

BW – Create a current assessment action report that will also be posted on the internal site for the HLC to access.

- **Current Assessment Action Report (Every year)**
  1. What does the current assessment data tell you?
  2. What are you doing about it now?
  3. What’s the plan for the future?

- This document will potentially be updated every year. If this doesn’t change you aren’t doing your job because this changes all the time; might not completely be overhauled but pieces will need to be updated each year.

- Don’t need to tackle new problem every single year; some significant changes may take several years

BW - COMBINE suggestion one and suggestion two for PROGRAM REVIEW (7 years)

- Process Description - *Suggestion One*
- Current Assessment Action – *Suggestion Two*
  - Determine where they go and who checks them for compliance
    - What use does it have? Why does it matter?
      - Provost
      - Vice Provost
      - Deans (Not all ask for annual reviews)
      - Associate Deans
      - Programs/Service Units
      - Stakeholders
  - Program Reviews --- Typically external; internal self-study given to peer review team
    - Provost
    - Vice Provost
    - Deans
- Associate Deans
- Programs/Service Units
  - Quantifiable data -------- How do we use this?

  BW – Do deans only hear about programs every 7 years?

  SP – Not one size fits all but doesn’t mean we can’t make it streamline as we move forward

  BW – So if I’m the dean and have 10 departments under me, how do I learn what’s happening in them?

  BKM – Depends on if provost or chancellor and some require annual report and some do not.

  JB – One end of spectrum is one college with one program and the dean learns about everything because everything done as meeting of home. On the other end, LLSS has most departments and some do reports some do biweekly meetings and most deans learn via oral communication.

  BW – Schools do this differently; some, like the UAC, know stuff about assessment and review annual report from every department – sometimes continuing system have now but more streamline but ANOTHER system leaves it all in hands of deans and associate deans that we, the UAC and HLC, expect you’ll be getting annual reports that include assessment of student learning ---- every single piece of paper that records life has assessment; becomes a piece of every effort made embeds efforts and won’t need reports.

  BW – Best of all possible worlds would be to embed assessment of student learning into fundamental processes by which programs reports to deans/provosts and money and policies come down.

  SP – **UAC functions** – Advantages of recent years from UAC, has been that we are helping improve the culture and leap frogged in some colleges. Prior to last HLC, the self-study tied to some program review initiatives, still some at dean level that refused to engage in assessment systems because have “own” programmatic accreditation. Engagement of senior leadership was fabulous after pushing and the UAC serves as champion of process.

  JB – **UAC functions** – 1. Dedicated group of people committed to assessment being part of our culture that not every dean/associate deans that don’t embrace it. 2. More faculty driven process; more control given – political pushback by eliminated UAC by cycling up to administration

  BW - You aren’t ready for that because deans aren’t ready for that

  BKM – However, the number of associate deans on committee is great 😊

  BW – **UAC functions** – What if the functions were before an area undergoes program review, their assessment system has to be Okayed by UAC at some areas. The Provost could insist approval by UAC before they would even release money to fund external reviews. UAC must approve and if UAC doesn’t provide approval to Provost you don’t do program review.
Possible roles for UAC

- 1. Advisory Group to Departments and Provost – supporter but something with little power to pass or not pass/punishment
  - BW - Streamlining our process could certainly still fulfill role in useful way – I strongly suggest that the UAC stay in place
  - JB – What if UAC became gatekeeper of first two processes?
    - Controls webpage and reaches out to area so they can submit processes and action plans and then we approve
    - Then ask every year to give data for current assessments and actions, etc.
    - Not so much as peer review/grading but as a true compliance committee; Before up on the web, does it meet streamline system of having criteria that we laid out
      1. BKM – Liaison could cover that for the college
      2. JB – Meet every three months and talk about problems, support issues, education efforts, etc.
        - BK – Virtual committee and liaison would take direction from your office for specific things
    - BW – But then why not have administrative e assistant do that?
    - SP – Improve quality through simplified process; evidence in annual analysis of what thought measuring where a lot of peer feedback has been going; is there anything do to streamline for continuous improvement of that

BW – Important thing to say ... UAC task is to raise the quality of a still inconsistent processes

1. Simplify the process as suggested so it looks easier
2. Provide areas with more guidance
3. Lean on some areas big time; especially the not compliant ones

- SAH- Whose roll and responsibility is it to lean?
  1. Dean or Deans delegate
  2. Vice Provost
    - BS – Doesn’t always mean they’re doing well even if they do it
    - JB – If form is easier, should be easier for departments to do it and do it in a timely way; should be easier to review it; mostly focus should be on whether or not they closed the loop – If doing that, reports become consistent
      - If not doing it, deans can get involved
    - LG – If tied to incentive (Provost, Trustees, President tell us that it’ll result in resources)
      - BW – It has to be; has to create incentive for people to do this and program review provides its own incentive, resources are connected to it
• CR – Assessment management tools out there that this stuff could be uploaded to and give feedback from different levels to streamline electronically

• BW – Assessment packages available; what those systems do in addition to costing money; tempt institution to collect 1,567 student artifacts and store them someplace or collect rubric’s that faculty members fill out about student learning; treat rubrics as validity behind efforts; enter something it becomes a barrier for faculty to have to get on the system and enter their stuff; some more rigid than others – troll – refused you to go on until you fill out this one piece; not at all without problems; must balance between logistical and technical things to make and what would be overkill and lead you into enormous things; not just cost and to train faculty to use (most unsuccessful)

• NH – Education always used electronic system; problem ran into diverse set of programs and licensures and does support reporting of those but issues ran into was initially develop our own because not commercially available and ran into resource problems and couldn’t sustain it; question: stuff has to go somewhere? Creates level of disengagement from person doing work, responsibility to work; last visit issue of disengagement; answer – electronic, easily implemented in body of work of those responsible of those who engage with accreditors, has to go somewhere which costs money; experience was the money was the killer (can’t be done for free); if it’s that important it should be supported with resources (Money, time, people), now using chalk on wire in third year of implementation – trying to manage resources

• BW – Perfectly possible for college to have more demanding software because of accrediting agencies and responsibility to state department of education; system like this does not need to spend $30,000 out of pocket for software system outside of what doing; doesn’t even count of use, training, etc. for faculty; because forms are relatively short and because data collection and analysis is done at the department level; department presents short reports (treat like qualitative data); go through and identify what’s working on and looking for themes; count and code and make lists of common concerns but usually not able to do numerically; not just put all figures in column and hit sum----- not what data does; you’ve tried to make it possible to
do that by checking boxes on our tables; but in actual fact it’s a lot to do 237 forms; but one person could do a reasonable report with 237 form just asking 2 or 3 questions drawn off these forms:

1. What questions need to know?
2. What things working on?
3. What should the institutional work on?
   - Useable things for higher admins
   - Could go through in 3 days; lot less time and money

JB – **UAC functions** – Resources are important but maybe that’s another function for UAC in addition to web management and time? Maybe the UAC looks for patterns of problems and identify strategy to deal with or look at various program suggestions (Costs) or ones that require resources. The UAC can help to evaluate priorities and can ask the provost for resources based on UAC priorities. We could identify the real issue with a concrete solution; we would also be the group to make your case too because we are tied to resources but wouldn’t be a bottomless pit.

BKM – Would you see the UAC tied to program review or just assessment for SLOS?

JB – Assessment because annual ongoing process that should create feedback loop but since only do 1/7 of programs each year we could address problems prior to visit and given super high priority.

CR – This might be a hard sell because as of now there are no resources distributed for good work. Maybe we create a new line item in fundraising to use a small portion for quality improvement. This will be telling faculty ‘yes, do good work’ and let’s use these funds to push things forward.

JB – I like that idea.

BW – Two funding streams ---- One funding stream could be the individual college or unit. A resource request and can go through dean/associate dean/director so we don’t have to wait for program review. Most deans doing their job don’t look at a resource request until they look at the data to support it but that can’t happen unless have information about student learning.

BW - Another funding stream ---- UAC or some enlarged group looks at all of the reports from departments, along with Core Curriculum Committee looks at reports for general education, plus other information (retention/CLA/relevant information) and decided overall what is something this institution needs to work on? Draw information from forms since now we’ll have a list of what departments think most institutions should work on but let’s have the data to back that up. The UAC then makes recommendation (very inclusive; very widespread) and gives to the top academic leadership with a list of three things to improve student learning institution wide. Senior leadership then picked one and put some pretty serious money behind it; went back into faculty and created a task force to make things better (look at what already doing, research literature, etc. then come back with action plan).
BS – Funds for that has been withdrawn these past few years

BW – Yes, happens but if we made an argument based on student learning evidence we now have whole different basis for argument. HLC wants us to show how we’re linking budget to assessment so they could look at this.

SERVICE UNITS

BKM – Where do service units fit in this?

BW – Problem is the same for service units as it is for academic program. You need a simplified form that really fits the service units. Maybe need a few different for direct services or support services and then you need to work with supervisors to whom people report so need for evidence is embedded in every single process that they follow. We won’t get anywhere without evidence.

BW – UAC functions – The UAC body should look at all of those things. Then you can decide how you run your show from now on. Is UAC police for compliance of turning in form and exercise compliances? If so, then how do we identify strong hold?

BW - UAC functions – Problem same for service as academic units; simplify; need system where units are required and helped to do the right then and reports/information needs to be used for resource allocation. What can the UAC do? BW likes JB suggestion of UAC to manage website, Liaison responsibility to get people to submit into this website; coach in that regard so need the help of deans/associate deans/supervisors to help; continue fighting the fight you’re fighting so department feels pressure from deans/association deans/supervisors and pressure/help from UAC;

BW - UAC functions – UAC may also be a body that takes a look at all of these reports.

LG – Concerning the number of those involved on UAC … Does every service unit that serves students do we need everyone? How do we pick people involved?

KD – Language is a part of this discussion because there isn’t anyone on campus that shouldn’t be doing improvements (facilities to doctoral level). Each has a different concept in understanding than assessment.

BKM – Colleges need to be at the table but also struggle with other hat and learning ventures; do they need to be here? Yes, absolutely, we’re doing it and we’re only doing it because we’re at this table.

SP – COGS service unit 100% with both direct and indirect student involvement at graduate level, one of advantages seen as part of UAC is fact that been able to hear about some common learning assessment outcome problems some people are having; service people have grown in number; I have student development programs on how to write this; common and efficient resource to use those within UAC to help make things better; used assessment as a tool to leverage internal and external reputation, etc.

BW – Conversation that addresses a problem

BW - UAC following processes are too labor intensify, you need to simplify what it does.
BW – The UAC has many strengths and needs to stay and stay strong. Arguments for large membership are compelling but this is a vehicle for different parts of the university to come together and listen/learn about assessment.

BW – Need to figure out how the UAC can serve its genuine functions without killing you all with a workload that won’t kill you all

BW - Focus on compliance rather than what all data says about what’s needed at the university; about how these avenues flow to right information makes it to the right people about policies and resources made for student learning

BW Answer – not to disband UAC; not to reduce UAC size; not to take UAC out of service assessment; do think answer lies somewhere in simplifying these system heavy on compliance review and not yet working well in terms of how information about student learning is aggregated, considered and used for decision making.

**Barbara Walvoord Re-Cap Meeting:**

Tuesday, April 15

2:30-3:30 p.m.

Location TBD