Part One: Committee Activities

Committee Members: Duane Lundy, Wazir Mohammed, Mengie Parker, Tanya Perkins, Jessica Raposo, Natalia Rybas, Cathy Foos (Chair)

Recommendations from last year’s committee, and actions taken:

Next year’s committee should push the use of the checklist, which asks people to make the connection between prior year and current year assessment efforts.

Rather than push the checklist (which is just a tool, not an end in itself), the committee revised the annual reporting form, adding some reflection questions to promote closing the loop and putting it in a more user-friendly tabular format. A copy of the new form is attached as an appendix to this report.

Next year’s committee should brainstorm, and implement, ways to address the improving, yet persistent, issue of faculty members not submitting their assessment data to the coordinators.

This item was not directly addressed. Mengie Parker and Cathy Foos facilitated a session at the annual retreat for new faculty, focusing on building a culture of assessment. The committee’s primary focus in 2014-15 was on providing greater support for the program assessment coordinators, working hard to make the coordinators feel supported and to demystify the process of assessment.

Next year’s committee should develop non-threatening ways to critique the assessment strategies of the various units.

This item was the primary focus of the committee this year.

The fall semester workshop focused on this by engaging the program assessment coordinators (and some others) in an activity assessing the current status of their assessment plans/implementation (“meta-assessment”). The rubric we had them use is attached as an appendix to this report.

At the spring semester workshop, coordinators once again used the rubrics, discussing with one another the progress they had made since fall and the challenges they encountered. The committee shared its goal of having every program reach at least level 3 on every item on the rubric, and coordinators identified steps needed to reach that level.
Other Comments:

This year’s committee had representation from each department; we (the committee and Dean Alexander) agreed to modify the committee composition moving forward. Beginning fall 2015, the HSS Assessment Committee will be composed of the assessment coordinators from each program. New in 2015: Ann Kim, Fine Arts; Beth Trammell, Psychology; Christine Nemcik, History; Justin Combs, Communication Studies.

Part Two: Summaries of Program Assessment Reports

Communication Studies

The action steps generated by last year’s assessment were:

1. Review the assessment map for the program to formulate concise and measurable outcomes that can be measured every year; -- completed in January 2015
2. Establish expected achievement levels for the outcomes;
3. Align assessment rubrics and learning outcomes for LO 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, and 1.5;
4. Change the details of the assignment used for assessing outcomes LO 1.4 and 4.3;
5. Modify rubrics for assessing LO 2.3 and 2.2.

Also accomplished in the past year:

1. curriculum map created, gaps in the program identified;
2. revised program curriculum submitted to HSS Curriculum Committee (some revisions pending);
3. new assessment instruments developed and implemented;
4. data gathering substantially expanded and faculty participation increased.

2014-2015 assessment results:

Proficiency targets were met in many, but not all cases. Action steps listed below speak to the deficiencies identified.

Action steps for the coming year:

1. Develop both direct and indirect assessment measures for at least 3 learning outcomes. These should strive to align across the learning curve (at the introductory level and the upper level).
2. Improve communication among all faculty teaching multiple section courses (at least S122 and C205) to ensure that the sections have standard elements incorporated in student learning, and standard assessment instruments applied in all sections.
4. Modify the courses and learning activities. For example,
   a. C205: develop pre-test and post-test
   b. C205: schedule the topic of intercultural communication earlier in the course
c. C205 and C427: work with appropriate examples to model student analyses

d. C427: plan targeted work with models of speech outlines

e. C427: align learning instruments with learning outcomes and rubrics for assessment


6. Submit curriculum changes in September 2015 for approval and, assuming the changes are approved by the end of Spring semester 2016) prepare for their implementation in Fall 2016.

Criminal Justice

The action steps generated by last year’s assessment were:

1. Revise data collection procedures.
2. Implement cumulative, class-based exams for seated courses.

2014-2015 assessment results:

Students scored at or above the program proficiency targets for two out of four PLOs.

Performance on all PLOs improved compared to last year, most likely due to revised assessment instruments (based on findings from 2013-2014 assessment plan) and better student participation in the assessment exam.

Action steps for the coming year:

1. Continued class-based and cumulative exams. Using class-based exams and cumulative exams (for online classes) may increase the amount of student engagement with the course material. The increased material engagement may help knowledge retention.

2. More thorough application of the Quality Matters Rubric. Using the QM rubric will help to ensure that all students are receiving a consistent educational experience. Additionally, the QM rubric helps to insure that faculty members are using best practices in their courses.

English

The action steps generated by last year’s assessment were:

1. review learning outcome target shortfalls for 400-level courses;
2. revise course assessment rotations;
3. implement revised and combined Exit Interview/Exit Survey;
4. revise the new concentration-specific rubrics as needed, as more data are gathered.

2014-2015 assessment results:

Collected data indicates that although most PLOs were met satisfactorily, student learning within the Literature concentration will benefit from further reinforcement of PLOs 1 & 2 in 300-level courses during the next academic cycle. Similarly, student learning within the Composition concentration will benefit from further reinforcement of PLO 5 in the 300-level courses, as two of the courses assessed did not meet targets for that objective during this cycle.
The English program submitted robust assessment data. Kudos to Tanya Perkins. Data were gathered from multiple assignments in numerous classes and separated out by whether the course was introducing the PLO, reinforcing it, or aiming at mastery. Use was also made of indirect, as well as direct, measures. Discussion of this report among all the assessment coordinators would be beneficial.

**Action steps for the coming year:**

*Assessment scores from this cycle will be shared with faculty at the beginning of the next academic year to initiate discussion on how to address potential soft points in the program, including:*

1. ways to support student outcomes within the Literature concentration relating to literary interpretation and critical approaches to texts
2. possible adjustments in the curriculum map
3. re-evaluation of the required introductory course for the Tech Writing concentration
4. possible fine-tuning of learning objectives, if needed, and
5. potential revisions to L450 and L470, Senior Seminars, in order to better assess student mastery of learning objectives within specific concentrations.

*From the Exit Surveys—The English program will examine ways to better communicate opportunities and activities for distance students, as well as investigate the possibility of offering a grant-writing course.*

**Fine Arts**

The action steps generated by last year’s assessment were:

*Begin building a robust set of assessment data by expanding the scope of data-gathering.*

**2014-2015 assessment results:**

Data, although not expanded from last year, were consistent with last year’s results, with the PLO relating to competency with terminology in the discipline remaining below the performance target.

**Action steps for the coming year:**

1. Have a list of important “Art Terminology” that ALL 100 level Fund. courses should address and come up with a list of methods that can be incorporated into the courses in order to ensure student achievement in that category.

2. Incorporate a mid-point studio visit by all Fine Arts Faculty (full-time and part-time if possible) for the Capstone class to impose another official deadline to aid them in meeting all the necessary deadlines.

3. One “experiential learning” method that can be used to improve all the areas of PLO would be to incorporate more exhibitions and artist lectures into the course curricula. Having a streamlined exhibition schedule that is publicized at the beginning of each semester and more invited artist lectures that are required for the students would be helpful: this way, we can also assign them to write about their experiences, which will reinforce their ability to utilize the terminology they have learned in the class. In order for this to work, it will be important to have a set calendar at the beginning of each semester.
History

The action steps generated by last year’s assessment were:

2013-2014 saw the end of an assessment cycle for the History program; a primary task for fall 2014 is to review the previous years’ reports and develop a new assessment plan for going forward.

Outcomes were revised, a revised curriculum map created, and the use of a common rubric adopted for use in ongoing assessment.

2014-2015 assessment results:

Students in the History Program classes do well with identification of major historical themes, events, and personas. They also achieve an understanding of the multicultural perspectives of historical pasts. There seems to be mixed results in the use and interpretation of a variety of historical sources and in devising appropriate research designs.

Action steps for the coming year:

1. Revise the History Program Assessment System to ensure that we are working to best fit our courses to the desired learning outcomes of the program.
2. Work to expose students to a variety of primary and secondary sources materials, and particularly help them to become more conversant with a variety of primary source materials. Help students to discover the abundance of historical monographs and scholarly articles that are so significant to developing historiographical awareness.
3. Press students to make progressive improvements in using source materials, creating sound analysis, and using documentation (footnotes) throughout the semester in order to see greater improvement over the course of assignments.

Humanities/Music

The action steps generated by last year’s assessment were:

For 2014-2015, the assessment tools and protocol will remain the same. Planned action steps are to revise assignments in the Theory classes in an attempt to improve outcomes. The Music History sequence will be offered next year, so there will be an additional set of data to work with.

2014-2015 assessment results:

Results regarding performance targets were mixed, varying by class and/or assessment tool rather than by learning outcome.

Action steps for the coming year:

1. Revisit the curriculum map to specify and clarify points of introduction, assessment and reinforcement of the various PLO components.
2. Work with the new aural skills instructor this coming year to develop measurement tools for use in the Sight Singing and Aural Perception classes, so we can assess the aural components of PLO #1.
3. Work with the applied lesson instructors to firm up understanding of the syllabus and assessment form, so we can have a more common set of definitions for student achievement in lessons.
Political Science

The action steps generated by last year’s assessment were:

No report was submitted in 2014

2014-2015 assessment results:

Minimal data submitted. Students in one class met the proficiency target for one PLO.

Action steps for the coming year:

This item comes from the (outgoing) Assessment Committee Chair, not the Political Science program:

Gather and submit robust data. Assessment is not optional and a “lick and a promise” is not satisfactory.

Psychology

The action steps generated by last year’s assessment were:

Assessment data were incomplete in 2014, so conclusions/recommendations could only be provisional and local. The action step for 2015 was to expand data gathering and faculty participation.

Progress in assessment in the past year:

- We made several changes to the exit exam for senior seminar. Even after this assessment year, it still appears there need to be some additional tweaks because several students had legitimate questions about a few of the items on the exit exam. We will continue to work on this as a faculty to get the best picture we can get of what students know when they leave here.

- We are now assessing each program objective every year. We are in the process of figuring out exactly how we are obtaining both direct and indirect measures of each of the program learning objectives.

- For several years, we have been continuing to keep a close eye on our research methods class. It is notorious for being one of the most challenging courses for both students and faculty. One of the main areas that we are noticing to be a problem is just the sheer amount content that is expected to be taught (and learned). We are in the process of making major changes to the learning outcomes and learning activities for the upcoming year. We are hopeful that with these changes, we will be able to get the type of learning from students that we are aiming to achieve. But the material in this course will always be challenging for students who are not used to thinking scientifically.

- We now have coordinators for each of the main courses in psychology (e.g., 103, 211, 216, 300). These coordinators are critical in maintaining the academic integrity of the course and ensuring the adjuncts who are teaching have the support they need.

2014-2015 assessment results:

Pre-test/post-test tools were used in several classes. Most items showed significant improvement from pre- to post; those that did not were identified.

Other assessment tools in other classes likewise showed proficiency achieved much of the time, with the gaps identified.
Committee Chair Note: The new tabular format for the report was not used, making summarizing the results more difficult. However, clearly a great deal of work went into gathering, analyzing, and reporting data over the past year.

**Action steps for the coming year:**

1. Continue monitoring and tweaking P211
2. Work on improving student performance for gaps identified in the various courses
3. Develop additional online course shells and make assessment consistent across all sections

**Sociology/Anthropology:**

The action steps generated by last year’s assessment were:

In Fall 2014 the department switched textbook for the Introduction to Sociology. The introduction course is our foundational course where these learning outcomes are first introduced. We needed to ensure that we were setting an appropriate foundation for the development and enhancement of our Program Learning Outcomes (PLO). *Analysis of S100 was our collective focus for this year.*

**2014-2015 assessment results:**

Students in the S100 sections met the target (Proficiency- 73-89%) in five of the eight learning outcomes. They scored in Developing Proficiency (60-72%) in the remaining four learning outcomes. We have significant improvement in research literacy from previous years. This would indicate that our change in textbook was appropriate. On the other hand, learning outcome H (sociological imagination) dropped from Exceeds Expectations, in previous years, to Developing Proficiency. The text does not emphasize this concept nor give students opportunities to practice the application of the knowledge. I had to create questions for the final to address this learning outcome since the test bank did not have even one appropriate question. I recognize that my questions might need to be adjusted along with enhanced instruction on this concept.

**Action steps for the coming year:**

1. Analyze the S100 final exam (individual questions, linkages to both General Education and Sociology Learning Outcomes) and target LOs that failed to meet the target range.
2. If additional classroom instruction is found to be necessary in S100 (to supplement the text), meetings will be arranged for the instructors to collaborate on strategies to facilitate learning of specific LOs.
3. Make any necessary changes to the S100 final to better measure both General Education and Sociology Learning Outcomes.

**Conclusion: Observations and Recommendations**

The use of longitudinal program assessment data to revise curriculum is becoming more conspicuous with each year. The past several years of emphasis on assessment coupled with substantial support for increasing faculty understanding of and facility with the process are clearly bearing fruit. A “culture of assessment” is still a future goal, however, not a present reality. This year’s committee determined that
a good idea for 2015-2016 (fall, if possible) is to bring in an outside expert in assessment to do consulting and workshopping with the faculty. This would tie in well with this year’s focus on meta-assessment, as program coordinators have been thinking strategically about the effectiveness of their assessment strategies. Thus, I recommend to and request of Dean Alexander that he provide financial support (OCC money?) to bring in someone like Barbara Walvoord or Susan Hatfield, both of whom do wonderful workshops.

Something noticed last year happened again: only a few of the current year reports directly addressed stated action steps from the previous year’s report. I will make a note directly to all the coordinators now, while it is fresh. I suggest that next year’s committee revise the reflection questions on the new reporting form to include a place for listing last year’s action steps and this year’s progress on achieving those (or revising) them.

In connection with improving assessment, it would probably be valuable for all the assessment coordinators (who will all be on the committee) to review each other’s reports (perhaps at the first committee meeting of the year). They can see how someone might have done something that would work well for them, or that they aren’t the only ones still at a “developing” rather than “proficient” level. Group discussion of these could be very helpful.