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**Oakland University
Senate (/?sid=230)**

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[\(/?id=7559&sid=230\)](#)

Senate Committee Charges
[\(/?id=7570&sid=230\)](#)

Committee Members
[\(/?id=7571&sid=230\)](#)

Constitution
[\(/?id=7572&sid=230\)](#)

Steering Committee Members
[\(/?id=7573&sid=230\)](#)

Reports and Proposals
[\(/?id=7574&sid=230\)](#)

Senate Archives Index
[\(/?id=7575&sid=230\)](#)

[OU Home \(/\)](#) > [Oakland University Senate \(/?id=0&sid=230\)](#) > [Senate Committee Charges \(/?id=7570&sid=230\)](#) > [Senate Committee Annual Reports \(/?id=7578&sid=230\)](#) > [University Committee on Assessment](#)

University Committee on Assessment

Annual Report

2001-2002

Members: Shannan McNair (Chair), Walli Andersen, Kris Condic, Isaac Eliezer, Lynn Hockenberger, John Klemanski, Charles Marks, Ishwar Sethi, Laura Schartman, Christina Sieloff, Floyd Willoughby. Bob Van Til attended meetings in the place of Ishwar Sethi.

Committee Review of Unit Assessment Reports and Plans

During the 2001-02 academic year, ten departmental assessment reports or updates were reviewed by the committee and responses sent to assessment representatives, department chairs, and school deans. Eleven units requested a postponement of their reports due to a variety of circumstances, and a number of reports are still outstanding. This response rate is similar to that of previous years.

Early in the year one department responded negatively to the review letter sent by the committee. The committee reexamined the review and response procedures and acknowledged the need to provide units with more direction for reporting assessment activities, results and action based on the results, and that an effort was needed to respond to reports in a timely fashion.

The committee review procedure was revised to include a new strategy of assigning two committee members to review each report. Those committee members reviewed the reports, and spoke to the departmental assessment representative in person to ask questions or clarify information. Our preliminary feedback is that the face-to-face contact with faculty responsible for unit assessment achieved more positive results in terms of better communication, and establishing a more supportive image of the University Committee on Assessment. In addition, we were able to provide faculty with more constructive comments in writing and minimize the frustration and dislike of assessment reporting that is so often reported. Committee members also learned more about the elements of effective program assessment as they worked together to review reports.

In 2001-2002, 6 assessment plans were submitted and reviewed by the entire committee at our biweekly meetings, along with written feedback about the plans provided by the Interim Assessment Coordinator. Plans were submitted for some units for the first time, and overall more plans were submitted and were more complete than in previous years. The committee credits this improvement to the work of the Interim Assessment Coordinator in 2001-2002.

University Assessment Plan

The University Assessment Plan was updated and submitted to the University Senate. It is posted on the Senate website.

Assessment Report Format

The assessment report format and procedure for soliciting reports were revised to help faculty to submit more complete reports in an easy to use format. This new format is posted on the OIRA Assessment website. The new procedures established call for a team of two committee members to be assigned for each program. Those team members will meet with the faculty representative and offer their assistance in answering questions or identifying resources for the unit's assessment planning, activities and reporting.

Communication and Support

Shannan McNair gave a brief update on the work of the University Committee on Assessment at a meeting of the Senate in January. Throughout the year the committee members have made an effort to communicate committee goals to their departments and other colleagues on campus and have encouraged feedback. Committee members listened to what faculty had to say about assessment, and brought that information back to our meetings to discuss and propose possible solutions to some of the barriers units face. Email communications to department and program heads generated some discussion of assessment issues and some identification of helpful resources by the University Committee on Assessment. In addition, the establishment of an assessment listserv encouraged some interesting discussion among faculty on current assessment issues.

OIRA created an Assessment area within its website to provide samples of assessment tools, particularly measures of student learning, sample reports and plans, and links to websites with assessment resources. As committee members talk with unit representatives about further improving their plans and assessment activities, they can direct faculty to the website as a resource.

At the request of the committee, the Interim Assessment Coordinator wrote guidelines for developing an effective assessment plan. These will be placed on the website as an additional resource for faculty and as a guide for members of this committee.

Assessment Education

The University Committee on Assessment supported the participation of ten faculty and assessment committee members at three national assessment and evaluation conferences in 2001-2002. The committee hosted two workshops, a workshop ♦An Assessment Makeover♦Implementing an Assessment Center♦ presented by Liz Barclay and Ken York from the School of Business and a workshop featuring Linda Suskie from Towson University focusing on the development of rubrics and other instruments for scoring products of capstone courses (final papers and presentations) and internships. In addition, two workshops were planned that will take place on September 3, featuring Gloria Rogers entitled ♦You Can Run But You Can't Hide: Making Assessment Work For You♦ and ♦Use of Electronic Portfolios.♦ Assessment committee members called chairs and assessment representatives from each unit in May and June, asking them to participate in this workshop.

Funding

In addition to funding conference participation and workshops, one unit on campus requested the partial funding for a faculty member to attend a pre-conference workshop on assessing writing. It is recommended that the level of funding provided for this committee this year be maintained next year to continue to provide promote more assessment activities and more learning about assessment, particularly keeping up-to-date with current standards, expectations and strategies.

Challenges

Although the committee members were positive and appreciative of the new position created this year, the Interim Assessment Coordinator, it would be helpful to further clarify roles and responsibilities of the position in relation to the Assessment Committee. Despite meetings during this past academic year, there continued to be some role confusion and duplication of efforts.

The committee strongly recommends clarification of the role of the Interim Assessment Coordinator. The committee perceives this position as a resource and support for the Assessment Committee and for units and that the committee answers to the Senate and its Senate charge. Since there is more than enough assessment work to be done; the committee can work with the Interim Assessment Coordinator in more complementary ways if expectations are further clarified early in the academic year.

Another perceived barrier to improving assessment was what seems to be a past lack of involvement by leaders (deans and chairs) in some units. Conveying clear expectations and support for assessment is important to moving to more compliance in assessing programs more systematically, and reporting assessment results on schedule. Although workshops and funding for conference participation are provided, faculty attendance is lower than it should be given the importance of assessment to the university.

Conclusion

In summary, the committee has been productive, innovative and responsive to faculty needs. We supported faculty efforts by spending time with individuals and departments, listening to their particular issues, and providing information and assessment examples on the OIRA website. We provided assessment education for committee members, at meetings and by supporting their travel to conferences, and hosted workshops open to all faculty and staff. We modified the reporting format and procedures to make it easier and more effective, and streamlined and personalized the review process. Recommendations for next year focus on continuing what was developed this year, and further clarifying the role of the Interim Assessment Coordinator. A major task for next year is to work with representatives from professional programs that are reviewed periodically by accrediting bodies to try to minimize the duplication of assessment documentation. In addition, maintaining lines of communication and information sharing about assessment is critical to the expectation NCA has for our campus.

Good and Welfare Recommendation:

For several years the University Assessment committee has felt it important to include the participation of a representative liaison from Student Affairs. We would recommend that this Student Affairs representative on the committee should be made an official Senate appointment in the future (VP for Student Affairs representative).

Respectfully submitted by Shannan McNair, Chair, and members of the Senate Committee on Assessment, Walli Andersen, Kris Condic, Isaac Eliezer, Lynn Hockenberger, John Klemanski, Charles Marks, Laura Schartman, Christina Sieloff, Bob Van Til, Floyd Willoughby



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