

University Committee on Assessment

Annual Report 2003-2004

Members: John Klemanski (Chair), Wallis Andersen (Winter 2004), Vanessa Bard, Celina Byers, Maria Cseh, Kasia Kietlinska (Fall 2003) Cathy Larson, Frank Lepkowski, Sandy Pelfrey, Laura Schartman, Christina Sieloff, Bob Van Til, Floyd Willoughby.

General

The University Assessment Committee (UAC) is proud to report several notable achievements made in 2003-04. Because of our workload, the Committee requested, and received approval for, two additional members. We were pleased to welcome Celina Byers and Sandy Pelfrey to our Committee this year, to bring our total membership to 12. In addition, two members rejoined the Committee after having served a three-year term. We thank Wallis Andersen and Robert Van Til for agreeing to serve another term. The Committee expresses its appreciation to Kasia Kietlinska, who replaced Wallis Andersen during the Fall 2003 semester while Prof. Andersen was on sabbatical. We also offer our most sincere gratitude to our outgoing members, Floyd Willoughby of the SBA and UAC Chair John Klemanski. Professor Christina Sieloff has agreed to rejoin the Committee for another 3-year term beginning in the Fall 2004 semester, and has agreed to serve as next year's chair as well. Many thanks to Christina.

In last year's report, we had indicated that our work output had doubled from the previous year – to reviewing 21 reports and ten plans. We are proud to report that this increased to 23 reports and 14 plans for the 2003-04 year. This workload is approximately three times greater than the workload of the Committee in 2001-02. Many more programs are at the brink of submitting plans, largely through the efforts of Professor Tomas Giberson. Beginning in the Winter 2004 semester, the Committee benefited from the assistance of Tom Giberson, Assistant Professor in SEHS. Tom was hired by the Office of Undergraduate Education to serve as the Assessment Coordinator, providing help to program faculty in developing their assessment plans. Tom's work is largely responsible for the increased number of programs who submitted new or revised plans for approval over the past several months. Tom also will be assisting as an assessment report is being drafted in preparation for the North Central Association's visit next year.

The University Assessment Committee met every two weeks throughout the academic year. Our first meeting was October 2, 2003, and our last official meeting convened on April 27, 2004.

The many accomplishments summarized in this report would not have been possible without the commitment and effort made by this year's Committee members. Committee members were unfailingly positive and productive throughout the year.

Review of Assessment Reports and Plans

The Committee continued last year's practice of assigning a team of two Committee members to each program that submitted an assessment report. The 2-member teams contacted departmental representatives or chairs to clarify any confusion and to discuss any proposed areas of improvement prior to preparing a response. The full Committee then discussed and reviewed the response. Once the Committee discussed the report, an email response was sent to each program's representative and/or chair, along with a copy to each respective unit's dean. This practice of copying the dean also continued a previous practice and was meant to more closely involve the deans in program assessment.

In response to requests, Chair Klemanski also met with representatives of programs and schools over the past year to discuss concerns and/or to ask questions regarding submitting plans and reports. Professor Klemanski met with representatives from Sociology and Anthropology, Women's Studies, Finance and Accounting, and the Executive Committee of SEHS. Committee members assigned to programs also made frequent face-to-face contacts throughout the year, as they assisted faculty in preparing assessment plans and reports.

Team members uniformly reported that this more personal approach seemed to produce positive benefits. While we recognize there still is some negativity about the assessment process, we are hoping to provide better assistance and explanations for our responses, rather than impersonally sending our written feedback.

For programs reporting in October 2003 and February 2004, the Committee has moved the reporting cycle to a 2-year rotation, for those programs that have been consistently submitting their reports on time. Programs and departments will be informed about their next reporting date as the Committee responds to their reports. Committee members felt that a 2-year reporting schedule would best serve programs that prepare reports while also meeting the needs of the North Central Association.

“Assessment of Student Learning” Website

The Assessment web site continues to be a valuable resource available to the campus community. In our discussions with faculty, it is clear that many are not aware of the web site and the assistance that these materials and links can provide. The Committee will try to do a better job of increasing awareness among campus faculty of the web site. Among the improvements last year included an expanded and more useful assessment web site. The web site offers:

- resource links
- information on student learning outcomes and measures
- an explanation contrasting student assessment with program review
- “criteria for reviewing reports and plans” that the Committee began using two years ago
- a reporting schedule for all campus programs

Assessment Executive Group

For the second year, an informal group of those involved in assessment began to meet during the 2003-04 year. The members were: Susan Awbrey, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education (and campus liaison with NCA); Laura Schartman, Director, Office of Institutional Research and Assessment; Ron Sudol, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs; Tomas Giberson, Assessment Advisor; and John Klemanski, Chair, University Assessment Committee. This group met periodically throughout the year and performed as an ad hoc Steering Committee as it complemented the work of the University Assessment Committee.

Commendable Programs

With this report, the University Assessment Committee would like to applaud several programs whose faculty have embraced assessment and used feedback information to improve their programs. In order to achieve “commendable” status, a program must meet three criteria: 1) an assessment plan that has been approved by the University Assessment Committee; 2) consistently submitted assessment reports on time; and 3) demonstrated through these reports that they have used information from their assessment activities to help improve their program, student services, and student learning outcomes.

The University Assessment Committee has identified the following programs as worthy of commendation in 2003-04:

- 1) Art & Art History
- 2) Dance
- 3) Journalism
- 4) Linguistics
- 5) Modern Languages
- 6) Human Resources Management (SBA)
- 7) Exercise Science
- 8) Physical Therapy

There are many programs that are close to achieving ‘commendable’ status. Many have just recently revised a dormant assessment plan or have just submitted a plan for Committee review. We look forward to reporting a much longer list in next year’s report. Interestingly, most of the programs noted above are located in the College of Arts and Sciences. This was a surprise to Committee members, because we knew that many programs located in the professional schools are fairly well advanced, in large part because of their accreditation processes. We have come to realize that many programs in the professional schools object to what they regard as “reporting twice” on assessment.

The UAC is trying to solve this problem. We are trying to communicate to programs that the NCA asks for information that is different than what is usually required by accrediting bodies. We have been working with the Schools to find a compromise that will allow reports submitted to our Committee to reach us as “cut and paste” products

from accreditation reports – as long as the proper information is reported and submitted. We noted this problem in last year’s report and have made some progress, especially with the School of Nursing. Other discussions have occurred with the School of Education and Human Services.

Challenges

In last year’s report, we commented on some of the challenges facing our campus with regard to assessment of student learning. Many of those challenges remain despite the progress we’ve made, and those challenges include the need for:

- improved faculty acceptance and “buy-in” to the value of assessment
- increased funding for assessment activities
- increased leadership by department chairs on assessment
- increased support and leadership by deans on assessment
- increased leadership by the President and Provost regarding assessment

For this year, we would add:

- programs in professional schools to submit assessment plans and reports

Conclusions

Committee members have much to be proud of this year. Progress has been made, especially in areas that are likely to produce long-term results. For example, we saw an increase in the number of plans and reports submitted for the second straight year. A number of programs are making steady progress in improving their plans and learning from their assessment activities. This process can be slow, but the Committee recognizes that assessment of student learning outcomes is a continual process of learning and improvement.

With the assistance that is now available to programs – through the web site, from the Committee, because of increasing skill among the faculty -- assessment on campus is poised to realize substantial improvements in the next few years.

Respectfully submitted by John S. Klemanski, Chair, and members of the University Assessment Committee: Wallis Andersen, Vanessa Bard, Celina Byers, Maria Cseh, Cathy Larson, Frank Lepkowski, Sandy Pelfrey, Laura Schartman, Christina Sieloff, Bob Van Til, and Floyd Willoughby.