

University Committee on Assessment

Annual Report 2002-2003

Members: John Klemanski (Chair), Wallis Andersen, Kris Condic, Maria Cseh, Cathy Larson, Laura Schartman, Gloria Sosa, Peter Shi, Christina Sieloff/(Theresa Thompson Fall 2002), Bob Van Til, Floyd Willoughby.

General

The University Assessment Committee (UAC) is proud to report several notable achievements made in 2002-03. During this academic year, the Committee reviewed and responded to 21 reports and reviewed ten assessment plans. The plans were reviewed for approval after the Interim Assessment Coordinator performed her review and made recommendations. These numbers roughly double the number of reports and plans that the Committee reviewed in each of the previous two years.

The University Assessment Committee met every two weeks throughout the academic year. Our first meeting was September 16, 2002, and our last official meeting convened on May 12, 2003.

The Committee also improved the assessment web site, now called "Assessment of Student Learning." Several new features were added, with new links and more information designed to help programs prepare reports and plans.

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. The Committee especially thanks Kris Condic, whose term has expired, greatly appreciates Wallis Andersen and Bob Van Til, who have volunteered to serve another term, and looks forward to our new members next year.

The Committee has greatly appreciated the technical assistance provided by Christine Hansen, Interim Assessment Coordinator. Chris reviewed assessment plans and made recommendations to the Committee regarding how programs can improve their plans and better meet the guidelines established by the North Central Association.

The Committee had the opportunity to meet with Provost Moudgil in February 2003. We shared our ideas with him, and later produced a list of recommendations that we thought could improve assessment on campus. We will continue to work with the Provost's office to monitor the progress of those recommendations.

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. Any program submitting a plan or a revised plan was referred to Chris Hansen. 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.

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 February 2003 and October 2003, the Committee has moved the reporting cycle to a 2-year rotation. Programs and departments will be informed about their next reporting date as the Committee responds to their reports. In the past, the Committee has asked for annual reports, then every three years, then every 1 ½ years. 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.

Committee-sponsored Assessment Events

During the 2002-03 academic year, the UAC sponsored two events on campus. On September 3, 2002, Gloria Rogers, Vice President, Institutional Research, Planning & Assessment, at Rose-Hulman University, led a full-day workshop on "Making Assessment Work For You." Approximately 30 faculty and staff attended this workshop.

On January 31, 2003, Larry Kelley, from Kelley Planning & Educational Services, conducted an all-day workshop on "Course Embedded Assessment." About 40 faculty attended this event.

In June 2002, John Klemanski and Laura Schartman attended the AAHE conference in Boston, along with Assistant SBA dean Marcia Lichty. The University Assessment Committee also provided funding for OU faculty and staff to attend the November 2002 Assessment conference at Indiana University-Purdue University in Indiana (IUPUI). Committee members Gloria Sosa and Cathy Larson attended this conference.

"Assessment of Student Learning" Website

Among the improvements last year included an expanded and more useful assessment web site. The web site offered:

- new resource links
- information on student learning outcomes and measures
- information on funding for assessment activities
- an explanation contrasting student assessment with program review
- “criteria for reviewing reports and plans” that the Committee began using this past year
- a reporting schedule for all campus programs

These criteria will provide programs and departments valuable information as they conduct their assessment activities and prepare their reports to the Committee.

Expansion of Committee Membership

Because of the Committee’s increasing workload, the Committee requested that the Senate approved the addition of two at-large members beginning in 2003-04. The Senate approved the addition of Celina Byers, SEHS, and Sandy Pelfrey, SBA, as the University Assessment Committee’s two new members to serve 3-year terms beginning in September 2003.

Assessment Executive Group

For the first time, an informal group of those involved in assessment began to meet during the 2002-03 year. The members were: Susan Awbry, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education; Laura Schartman, Director, Office of Institutional Research and Assessment; Ron Sudol, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs; Christine Hansen, Interim Assessment Coordinator; and John Klemanski, Chair, University Assessment Committee.

This group formed in response to some difficulties in coordinating assessment campus activities along with the need to meet NCA reporting guidelines. Last year’s report by the University Assessment Committee noted some difficulties related to what were regarded as competing responsibilities and overlapping authority. It is fair to say that these difficulties were eliminated, largely because of the increased trust and understanding that came from the Assessment Executive Group’s regular communication. This group met monthly and worked well by complementing and supplementing the work of the University Assessment Committee.

Challenges

Oakland University still needs fuller participation from all parts of the campus on assessment. This can include, but is not limited to:

- 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

We still have not identified a student representative for this Committee. In the past, a student has been selected, but failed to attend regularly. This past year, no student was identified or served on the Committee.

Committee members have noted some resistance to assessment in many units on campus. The professional schools (with external accreditation requirements) often feel they are compiling assessment reports for accreditation, then “re-inventing the wheel” with their need to submit a separate report to the Committee. A number of units (at least 15 this past year) simply have failed to report or submit a plan at all.

Conclusions

Committee members have much to be proud of this year. Considerable progress has been made, especially in areas that are likely to produce long-term results. For example, it should be considered a substantial improvement that we received double the number of reports this year than we did last 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, Kris Condic, Maria Cseh, Cathy, Larson, Laura Schartman, Peter Shi, Christina Sieloff, Gloria Sosa, Bob Van Til, and Floyd Willoughby.