

Assessment Committee Meeting
March 10, 2004
11:00-2:30
System Administration – Board Room

Kimberley Reiser, Joe Hildreth, Achim Koedderman, Patricia Francis, Robert Golden, Stephanie Gross, Thomas Finch, Jim Schofield, Don Steven, Daniel Hayes, Scott Shannon, Doug Jones, Wayne Fulks, Andrea Rubin, Karen Spellacy, Marvin LaHood, Norm Goodman, Ted Skotnicki, Bob Jubenville

Via conference call: Doug Sanders, Carol Eaton, Ken O'Brien, Peter Knuepfer

Review of Chancellor King's Proposal

Kimberley Reiser opened the meeting by explaining the purpose of the committee and referred to the following APPCC motion, which states: "The APPCC strongly recommends that a true University-wide committee be formed with broad representation and a reasonable calendar to address strengthened campus-based assessment." She then referenced Chancellor King's letter of November 5, 2003 in which he invited the faculty to develop an assessment proposal based on the following four points.

1. An assessment framework for determining the growth in learning achieved by SUNY undergraduates in the building blocks of general education.
This framework should consist of a set of instruments administered at two points in time: close to the student's entry to the institution and at some later date when the student has completed this learning. The designated measures should include "externally referenced measures" — which I will interpret as either nationally or SUNY-normed — in addition to those already in place in campus plans. This, in my view, meets the goal for accountability.
2. A survey instrument that will provide for an understanding of the indicators that reflect the campus academic environment.
3. An analysis of the relationship between academic assessment results and these environmental influences.
4. An indication of how individual campus plans will be folded into the GEAR approval process, including the specific criteria that GEAR will use in approving them.

Joe Hildreth explained that the building blocks of general education referred to in point number one, are the learning areas of writing, critical thinking, information management, mathematics and the methods scientists and social scientists use. In addition, he mentioned that the survey instrument mentioned in point number 2 could be the National Survey of Student Engagement or the Community College Survey of Student Engagement which is currently being used by several of our campuses.

Background Statements

Kimberley Reiser discussed and distributed a document entitled: "A University-wide Assessment Chronology", from the Faculty Council of Community Colleges. It began with the June 17, 2003 Board of Trustees resolution calling for the implementation of a System-wide assessment. She noted that over half of the community colleges have deliberated on the Chancellor's revised proposal. To date 19 of 20 community colleges do not support the revised proposal.

Nonetheless, representatives of the Faculty Council have joined the University-wide committee to discuss the strengthened campus- based assessment.

Joe Hildreth presented the University Faculty Senate background statement on assessment. The assessment issue began with the discovery in 1999 of a request for an across-the-board national test for the twelve learning outcomes of the SUNY General Education requirement. He stated that the UFS passed three resolutions which opposed University-wide assessment. The following faculty concerns toward University-wide assessment were the basis for this opposition. Faculty are opposed to:

1. The public reporting of assessment data. This could embarrass and harm institutions.
2. The standardization of the curriculum. We value diversity and feel that is one indicator of a great university.
3. Another layer of assessment. Campuses in good faith developed a campus-based assessment plan. One more layer is not necessary.
4. Value-added assessment. Assessment is expensive enough without having to double the cost by assessing twice.
5. Another unfunded mandate. Campus budgets are already stretched to the limit. We simply do not have the resources to add another assessment layer.
6. High stakes assessment.
7. Campus budgets being tied to assessment results.

Don Steven presented the System Administration position. He said that it has always been the goal to move assessment forward together, that is faculty and System Administration, through consensus. The Chancellor has said that if the committee proposal met his expectations and has the support of faculty governance, he would be willing to consider revisions to the June 17 resolution. The approach now is to address the issue in terms of strengthened campus based assessment and he indicated that the Chancellor's points were based on the structure of Truman State University's nationally-recognized assessment plan, which he distributed at the meeting. (Professor Koedderman added that he did not agree with this comparison.). Don Steven indicated that he felt that the committee should try to make every effort to develop a shared effort of what it wants to see.

Kimberley Reiser discussed trustee involvement in the meeting. It was noted that Kimberley Reiser and Joe Hildreth asked that four trustees be invited and Joe Hildreth forwarded the names to the Secretary of the University. The committee thought it was important to have the trustees involved. After consultations and discussions, System Administration felt that this might not be helpful at this time.

Proposal Components

The group discussed how the revised campus plans could be folded into the GEAR process. It was agreed that the proposal would contain this component. It was also stated that no additional System layer should be added. The group felt that campuses should provide an analysis of the assessment results.

Samples of the National Survey of Student Engagement and Community College Survey of Student Engagement were distributed and discussed. The group felt either of these surveys or

a revised, extended Student Opinion Survey or similar measures could be used to provide a context for understanding campus assessment results.

Value-added Assessment

Value-added was understood to mean two separate measurements taken of the same learning area. The assessment would occur at different points in time. After some discussion it was determined that value-added assessment could be an option.

Assessment of the Building Blocks of General Education Using External Measures

After considerable discussion it was decided that the learning areas of Information Management and the methods scientists and social scientists use could be dropped. Don Steven suggested revising the GEAR guidelines to focus on the areas of Writing, Critical Thinking and Mathematics. There was discussion regarding the relevance of Information Management and it was decided to focus on only Writing, Critical Thinking and Mathematics. Regarding the concept of 'externally-referenced measures', there was agreement that there needs to be a flexible interpretation of external reference and that GEAR itself may not have the specific expertise to be the external reference. What is needed is the inclusion of nationally-referenced measures, or the correlation of campus measures with nationally-normed or SUNY-normed measures. In the latter event, GEAR would rely on subcommittees with special expertise in these areas. There would only need to be a couple of changes in the guidelines to address the revised process. Don and Patty will identify the revisions to the GEAR guidelines and let the committee know. Stephanie Gross asked that a student be involved in GEAR in the future.

The group also agreed that language which safeguards the reporting of data should be included in the proposal.

Joe Hildreth summarized the assessment proposal components as follows:

1. The existing campus-based plan will only be revised. There will not be a second System-based layer.
2. An instrument such as the National Survey of Student Engagement, the Community College Survey of Student Engagement, a revised, extended Student Opinion Survey or similar measures will be used to understand the campus academic climate and how that might relate to the assessment results.
3. A campus-based analysis of the assessment results, which could use information from the NSSE or CCSSE, will be incorporated into campus procedures.
4. The assessment of the building blocks of General Education—for campuses using a "level of achievement" approach—will use externally referenced measures. Various options for doing this will provide real flexibility for campuses.
5. Only the learning outcomes in three areas will be assessed incorporating external measures. These areas are writing, critical thinking, and mathematics.
6. Value-added assessment (two measurements of the same learning area given at different points in time) will be optional.
7. System Administration will cover the cost of all externally referenced measures or surveys for a representative sample.
8. The proposed policy will contain language which will safeguard the publication of raw assessment data.

Achim Koedderman pointed out that, in the spirit of the Faculty Senate resolution of April 29, 2000, campus plans should incorporate active faculty and student participation in the development and choice of externally referenced measures.

Following Joe's summary, there was a spontaneous round of applause from the committee.

Minutes from this meeting will be sent to this committee for approval. After approval, they will be sent to the Senators and CGLs and others as identified by Kimberley Reiser, Joe Hildreth and Don Steven.