

UAC Meeting Minutes (4-7-2010)

Attendance: Monica Baloga, Guy Bruce, Ken Crooks, Brian Ehrlich (teleconference), Veronica Giguere, Pierre Larochelle, Rodd Newcombe, Hamid Rassoul, Ted Richardson, Tim Rosser, Matt Ruane, Manolis Tomadakis, Richard Turner, Alex Vamois, and Leslie Savoie (OIR, guest)

The meeting opened with handing out the *Assessment Clear and Simple* book to all committee members with the exception of Brian Ehrlich (University Alliance representative). He will obtain his next week when he is in the Melbourne area. This book is a reference on assessment and is for committee members and assessment coordinators within each college.

Welcome. Veronica Giguere was introduced to the committee as a new member since she coordinates the University Experience courses and its efforts on campus. Leslie Savoie, Director of Institutional Research and Assessment, was introduced as guest speaker.

The Office of Institutional Research and Assessment. The floor was given to Leslie who described the role of the Office of Institutional Research (OIR) in gathering institutional research data for internal and accreditation/external purposes. With regard to student assessment efforts, she reported that her office oversees the administration and reporting of data on National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) every two years, and her office works with CoE with their ABET efforts. Along those lines, she described her office's role in developing student surveys, administering them, and gathering information for CoE and Career Services. She offers these same services to anyone on campus.

Discussion followed on possible reports based on students who take standardized exams in preparation for entrance to medical or graduate programs (e.g., MCAT, GRE). The OIR does not collect this information as it can only be obtained with the permission from the student taking the exam. It was suggested the Enrollment Management may have some of that information.

Consultation needs. The committee was asked about consultant needs for SLO assessment purposes. A consultant from UCF, Dr. Mia Alexander-Snow (former Assistant Director of Assessment), has agreed to work with our members in the form of a half-day workshop on SLO assessment. It was recommended that this workshop be opened also to the departmental coordinators. There was general agreement on submitting inventory lists to Dr. Snow so that she can get an idea of where the university stands in terms of SLO assessment. It was also recommended that the information be compiled in a uniform format or template. There will be follow up with Dr. Snow about possible dates and how she would like the inventory information to be compiled.

The issue of securing a central repository for assessment data collection was reiterated. Discussion followed about using ANGEL (the Learning Management System used by Florida

Tech) to link course assignments, projects, etc. to specific learning outcomes. However, it was revealed that ANGEL is not available for the University Alliance courses.

Assessment Inventory of Courses, Programs, Department. Each Department representative gave a brief overview of the assessment inventory in their areas.

1. Extended Studies Division: Dr. Richardson first outlined the history with assessment within this division since the 2005 SACS Reaffirmation Report. He indicated that ESD programs needed better evidence that they are meeting learning outcome expectations. Once the immediate SACS standards were satisfied, he began the process of setting up capstone courses in each program that meet four basic knowledge outcomes. The Division has been through several iterations of these courses and after reviewing the data, they are in the process of enhancement them by adding additional courses that address the learning outcomes.
2. College of Aeronautics: Dr. Rosser stated that AABI, the programmatic accrediting body, is changing to an assessment's based process, effective immediately. AABI is now aligning with ABET (Engineering's programmatic accrediting body) learning outcome standards. The department is in the process of addressing those standards. With regard to the undergraduate programs in Aviation, Dr. Crooks indicated that the programs met detailed FAA standards that encompass learning outcomes assessment.
3. College of Business: Dr. Vamosi reported that the college submitted their application to AACSB, their programmatic accrediting body, last year. Their submission included detailed information on learning outcomes assessment. There are 5 goals for all undergraduate programs and for the MBA program. Learning outcomes are defined for each goal, assessment methods were determined, and courses were identified where the assessments would take place.
4. College of Engineering: Dr. Larochelle reported that there is an established "culture of assessment" within the college because of the extended period of ABET accreditation. Dr. Tomadakis confirmed that measures were being evaluated for graduate programs.

(As the time was near 11:00 a.m., many committee members had other obligations and needed to leave. Although the meeting was adjourned, representatives from the School of Psychology and from the Academic Support Center were given a brief moment to relay information to the remaining committee members. Dr. Bruce commented on the definition of "learning outcomes" and the implications for collecting valid measures of them (see addendum for further information on this) and Ms. Giguere indicated her willingness to support academic department's assessment needs within the framework of the University Experience course. No Action Items were assigned and a new meeting date was not established at this time.)

Addendum to the Minutes

Guy Bruce's comments about the definition of "learning outcomes" and the implications for collecting valid measures of them:

The field of behavior analysis has its technical definitions of "learning", but surprisingly, these are not so very different from non-technical definitions of learning. For example, Merriam-Webster defines "learning" as follows:

Main Entry: **learning**

Function: *noun*

Date: before 12th century

- 1 : the act or experience of one that learns
- 2 : knowledge or skill acquired by instruction or study
- 3 : modification of a behavioral tendency by experience (as exposure to conditioning)

Merriam-Webster defines "outcomes" as follows:

Main Entry: **out•come**

Pronunciation: \ˈaʊt-ˌkəm\

Function: *noun*

Date: 1788

: something that follows as a result or consequence <a surprising outcome> <patient outcomes of bypass surgery>

But here is a technical definition from behavior analysis from one of our standard textbooks for graduate students

"Learning: roughly acquisition, or the process by which behavior is added to an organism's repertory; a relatively permanent change in behavior" (Catania, 1998).

Both non-technical and technical definitions imply that at least two measures are necessary to evaluate "learning" or "learning outcomes." One can't measure acquisition or a change in behavior without at least two measures of performance at two different points in time. One can't measure change in any natural phenomena, physical, biological, chemical without at least two measures taken at two different points in time!

A “learning outcome”, such as competent performance in a particular field of study must be something that follows as result or consequence of completing the requirements for a degree program. The only way we could determine whether student performance was in fact a result or consequence of completing a degree program would be if we had measures of that performance both before and after the students completed the program of study.

I would suggest that if we are going to expend the effort to measure “learning outcomes” we might as well collect accurate measures of learning outcomes by collecting at least two measures of desired knowledge and skill, one upon program entry and the other at program completion. This information on improvement is more valid measure of what the program accomplished or its results than simply measuring student performance after completing the program.