05/01/2012

Gen Ed DRC Present: Matthew Ruane, Cecilia Knoll, Alan Roseine, Catherine Cooke, Veronica Giguere, Joel Olson, Maria Lavooy, Monica Baloga

Conference call with Dr. Ernie Gonzales.

MB handed out the questions for the committee to consider.

EG: Specifics (i.e. 70% scoring) is not so important at this time.

MR: 2 questions that didn't make it on the list. 1. Integrating the face-to-face students and the online program. 2. When do we assess students who already have existing credits (i.e. transfer students). Do we assume that they meet the core requirements based on their transfer credits?

EG: First a question - do you have an assessment mechanism in place? Answer - no. That would be a good starting point for you folks. To find a recognized assessment tool that would capture the quality of transfer students. A test will eliminate all ambiguity. IT would be good to spend time considering the different assessments out there. Must evaluate them in the context of our GE skill set that we want. We asses incoming freshmen, transfer students, and graduating seniors.

MB - Who pays for the testing at USF? Student fee?

EG: No student fee for the exam. But we don't assess every student. e.g. at the end of last year College of Business used ETS field test for business students. So COB proposed to include a fee for every student with a fee. Otherwise paid for from Provost's budget ($15/exam).

MB - what is your sampling size?

EG - For this instrument (ETS), it give valid results when you meet a minimum threshold of 50 students. So we select cohorts of students. So for graduating seniors, we try to get a good balance of different colleges within the institution. As long as there are a representative number of students from each college, it's fine. This is a 'proxy measure' that does not require proper experimental design with pre/post results, etc. We try to oversample (~75 students).

JO - how do you motivate senior to do well on the exam?

EG - culture of the institution makes a huge difference. I don't like to incentivise any kind of survey or assessment. It should stand on its own merit. There must be some intrinsic motivation. There can be some escalation with incentives. We talk to the faculty and let the students to know how important it is. Let the students know that the

results of the test are important for the value of their degree. And allow students time out of class to take the exam.

MB - What will be sufficient at the course level

MR - How are your freshmen cohorts chosen?

EG - Freshemen are easy because we have freshmen orientation. Upper division transfer students are required to go to orientation. We select them randomly. Seniors are more difficult.

MR - our core is a series of courses take. Tere are three courses that every student takes. There were as many as 15 courses that we noted could possibly assess some of the core requirements. But we don't have the infrasturcture to assess all of these courses.

ER - We don't have the infrastucture either. Since we were on probration, we had to have a 100% sample, which is easier. There is not a single set of courses that all students have to take. We asked our faculty to develop student learning outcomes and to address whether they were developing the SLOs. The faculty then indicated which SLOs their courses were including. Then the faculty were developing questions that assess the SLOs. A grade in a course is not sifficient to assess the SLO. This does not require a great deal of infrastucture since the faculty are doing it themselves. We've seen close to 100% faculty complience.

AR - so the assessment has been built right into the courses.

EG - yes. Over time this evolves into the culture of the institution.

MR - we've been experiencing occasional pushback from the faculty.

MB - we've alreqdy started some of that with out quality enhancement plan. Particularly in the areas of communication and critical thinking. That has been incorporated throughout the entire undergrad curriculum. Now we're focusing on discipline specific knowledge as well. Everyone can ID where to assess students for program level learning, but we're still having trouble IDing whhere this will happen for the Gen Ed core.

EG - Hammer the point that this is an important activity for the university. Then faculty will get on board. SOme view it as an intrusive activity, or an issue of academic freedom. But ist's not - no one is telling the faculty what to each or how to teach it. But it does assess whether any learning is really going on in the class. Accrediting bodies are asking the faulty to be aware of the learning outcomes. When I talk to folks, I try to take it away from the faculty and to the student - what we are assessing is not faculty teaching, but rather student learning. We are asking faculty to be a little more mindful of their craft of teaching. Frame it as a professional development activity.

JO - are you both using standard tests as well as assessing in the classroom?

EG - yes. So we can show that students are mastering a particular component of the course. We have 200 courses in our GE catalog.

MR - How defined (if at all) was the GE program before you stepped in?

EG - Facluty had identified certain course that would constitute GE. Problem was that USF Tampa came up with a very sophisticated, multi-dimensional GE approach. USFP tried to embrace that and come up with something similar but was not able to do it. So there was a bare-bones set of GE courses, and kept adding courses but didn't think about it in terms of the student. Eventually had over 600 GE courses. So no two students would have the same course of study. USFT also go tinto trouble and reverted to a much simpler strategy. Must stay focused and get to an endpoint.

MR - so haivng a more limited set of courses to meet the GE guidelines would be better.

EG - yes. you have to show that there is coverage of the learning outcomes with the GE core.

CC - for a school of our size, would 50 courses be aceptable?

EG - what does your facluty/committe think? The institution and faculty need to come up with what the actual courses are.

MB - if we can talk to the faculty regarding the content of their courses, we might be able to reduce the number of core courses.

EG - calrify - don't bite off more than you can chew. Not advocating de-certifying courses since faculty can push back. Made a course matrix that showed the GE requirements as well as the active courses to show that the students gain the SLOs as they navigate the courses. Then, can identify courses that aren't offered too frequent that will kind of 'wither on the vine' as a method to pare down the number of courses. We discovered that students could get a 4 year degree without having taken a course in history. That's not good.

MB - 9 month faculty interested in meeting over the summer. Names were collected.

AR - previously mentioned the ETS.

MB - What's becoming the way to approach it is to have an internal as well as an external assessment to 'triangulate' the results.

MR - we need to start assembling the course matrixes. Especially since Civ 2 is no longer required.

AR - now we need to look at all the other HU and SS courses to ensure that the GE items are included in the courses.

VG - the matrix approach is less threatening to the faculty.

MR - talked to MB regarding having a college of engineering rep on the committee. ut they don't really have GE courses.

MR - will set up a doodle to schedule the next meeting. Also, will begin building the course matrix.

Last meeting's minutes were approved.