**Academic Assessment Committee Minutes Index Spring 2007**

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Dr. Rhodes opened the meeting at 3:00 p.m. and introduced the Committee’s invited guest, Dr. Tom Mack, Chair of the English Department.

Dr. Mack provided the Committee with a brief history of assessment in the English Department, including an overview of how assessment methods were developed and have evolved since the 1990-91 SACS Self Study. The Committee complimented the English Department for their continuing leadership in assessment on campus and in their discipline.

The remainder of the discussion revolved around issues raised in the invitation letter sent to Dr. Mack that provided an outline of the Committee’s initial response to the Department’s assessment system. These issues broadly involved the following items:

**Goals & Objectives**
- Division of the Department’s goal for majors into two separate statements to cover students abilities both to 1) derive meaning from texts and 2) write analytically. Dr. Mack agreed that he and his faculty members would talk about this recommendation.
- Explanation of the term "close reading" in the Department’s objectives for those outside of the discipline. Dr. Mack explained this term to the Committee as “careful and sustained reading” and indicated that his faculty members would discuss how to present this to a wider audience.
- Measurement of students’ abilities by genre. Dr. Mack indicated that faculty members have not directly measured student competencies in each genre, although exit survey results have indicated that student choice and faculty resources had prompted most students to emphasize fiction over poetry and drama, although recent hires may change this over time.

**Presentation of Findings**
- Presentation of trend data. Dr. Mack noted that the shift in 2003-04 to include assessment findings in annual program review reports likely prompted the removal of trend data from the report submitted to the Committee. He shared trend data from the rubric evaluating senior projects through 2003.

Dr. Rhodes and the other members of the Committee thanked Dr. Mack for his good work in assessment and for attending this meeting.

**Recommendations for the English Department**

The Committee approved two recommendations for inclusion in the final letter to the Department:
- First, subsequent assessment reports should identify analytical writing as a goal-level outcome separate from the other goal to derive meaning from texts. The Department will need to identify objective-level outcomes for analytical writing, although much of this articulation and measurement may be present already in the Department’s current rubric for the evaluation of the senior project. Second, subsequent assessment reports should provide trend data at the objective level as well as an appendix of measurements from the senior project for six years.

The Committee also decided to suggest that the Department provide explanatory language for the disciplinary term “close reading” and also to suggest that faculty discuss whether student competencies should be measured in each major genre. These suggestions should be mentioned
in the letter to the Department but they do not rise to the level of recommendations that must be addressed in subsequent assessment reports submitted by the Department.

**Report on Committee Recommendations from 2005-06**

Dr. Hosch shared initial findings from his review of the assessment sections of 2005-06 program review reports of units that received recommendations from the Committee in Spring 2006. He reported that the responsiveness of academic units to Committee recommendations dropped from 71% in the previous year to 47% this year. He made the suggestion that the Committee could send a reminder to Chairs in September that their recommendations should be addressed in the program review report submitted in October. The Committee will consider this issue in more detail when Dr. Hosch submits his final report.

**Initial Letter to the Department of Mathematical Sciences**

The Committee discussed the responses individual members had shared via email about the initial letter to the Department of Mathematical Sciences. Some concern was expressed in this feedback that the section about assessment of the industrial mathematics major discussed in the letter was not feasible. After discussion, it was decided to retain this section in the letter to the Department Chair.

**Next Meeting**

The next AAC meeting will be on March 9, 2007, 2:00 p.m., Penland 110. (Note room change.) Professor Jack Benjamin will be asked to attend to discuss the Visual and Performing Arts Assessment Report.

Respectfully submitted,

Maureen Bergstrom
Academic Assessment Committee  
March 9, 2007  
Minutes

Present:   L. Rhodes (chair),  B. Pirkle, W. Schweder, Y. Zhang,  
B. Hosch (ex officio), M. Bergstrom (guest)

Dr. Rhodes opened the meeting at 2:30 p.m. and introduced the Committee’s invited guest, Dr. Mohammad Hailat of the Mathematical Sciences Department. 

Dr. Hailat noted that he was very happy to receive the Assessment Committee’s letter of February 12 because he had not had anything to go on previously regarding assessment. He explained to the Committee that the Mathematical Sciences Department now has three assessment committees, two involving the mathematical side of the major and one regarding the computer science side of the major. One mathematical committee is involved in the Gen Ed courses, 103, 104, and 108. The other mathematical committee is working on the upper level courses. The third assessment committee is working on the computer component of the department. 

The math assessment committee members brought back suggestions to Dr. Hailat after their initial meetings. In the upper-level committee meeting, two courses especially stood out. Cobol and Fortran are “old” programs. Although they are not taught, they show up in the bulletin. The committee recommended that these courses be taken off programs, bulletins, and other written materials. 

The goals and objectives of the Mathematical Science Degree were also discussed, as noted below.

Goals & Objectives

Goal 1: Knowledge of Mathematics and Computer Science: Students in Math/CS are expected to demonstrate substantial knowledge of analysis, algebra, common algorithms, algorithm design, and a high-level programming language. 

Another programming course that the Department was teaching was Mathematica. Students learn calculus with Mathematica. However, it is not a user-friendly program and students did not like it. They requested that the software be changed to something more user-friendly. 

The Math Assessment Committee suggested that the department change Mathematica. They are now using a new textbook for calculus sequence and using Maple Programming software. It has proven to be good for both the students and the faculty. The students are able to learn calculus and the faculty have less hours to devote to the programming course, thus reducing their load. 

Computer Science now offers at least two courses during the semester. Many students had difficulty getting the courses required because of scheduling difficulties. Four new courses have been presented to various committees on the campus and they are now waiting for them to have the final go-ahead. 

New courses to be offered will be Visual Programming, Business Applications, Scientific ______ and Unix Environment.

Goal 2. Mathematical Reasoning: Students in Math/CS are expected to develop ability to analyze and solve complex mathematical problems with logical reasoning. 

The Math Assessment Committee drafted tentative goals for improving Goal 2:
2.1 Students will be able to use symbolic expressions, including iterative and recursive forms, to represent mathematical relationships and be able to use them to evaluate mathematical conjectures with rigorous logic reasoning.

2.2 Students will be able to select and use appropriate mathematical methods to analyze and solve multi-step problems

2.3 Students will be able to recognize and analyze mathematical structures and their connections across the mathematics curriculum.

Presentation of Findings

The AAC’s letter to the Math Department noted: “Committee members generally agreed that the presentation of findings was reasonably effective, but this aspect of the report could be made more effective through an explicit articulation of the measurement scale faculty used to measure student learning outcomes. Indeed, one Committee member commented, on a scale of 0-4, “what does a 4 mean?”

Dr. Hailat noted that mathematicians sometimes use terms or numbers that other, non-mathematicians may not understand. He said that his department will clearly note in the next report the scale, 0-4, so that non-mathematicians will be able to understand.

Industrial Mathematics

Dr. Hailat discussed the Industrial Mathematics Degree. He stated there were different reasons for keeping the Degree in place. Two of the professors in the Math Department teach courses in it. One professor is working with (or planning to work with) the local high schools to encourage students to come to USCA.

Dr. Hailat pointed out that the degree is not costing the University a lot of money. They only teach one or two courses a semester, and one of those courses may be independent study. The students who are registered for Industrial Mathematics take other math courses, so that would be a benefit to the school.

The Department usually gets 60 or more students who come to USCA intending to transfer to an Engineering Program at another school. However, many of those students like USCA and instead stay here.

He did note that there are not many students enrolled, this year there are seven, and some of those are not full-time.

Next year, they will try to make goals and objectives for the Major. He stated that it’s “a nice major, but they need to sell it.”

It was then discussed about making the Industrial Mathematics into a concentration rather than a degree. The department would not have to assess it, if it were a concentration. Dr. Hailat said his department would look into this suggestion.

Next Meeting
The next AAC meeting will be on March 30, 2007, 2:30 p.m., H&SS 201. Professor Benjamin will meet with the Academic Assessment Committee.

Respectfully submitted,

Maureen Bergstrom
Academic Assessment Committee  
April 20, 2007  
Minutes

Present: L. Rhodes (chair), W. Schweder, Y. Zhang, C. Eller  
B. Hosch (ex officio), M. Bergstrom (guest)

Dr. Rhodes opened the meeting at 2:30 p.m. and introduced the Committee’s invited guest, Dr. Ralph Byington, Dean of the School of Business.

Dr. Byington thanked the Academic Assessment Committee for its thorough document discussing the assessment work done in the School of Business. He explained that under the 2003 accreditation process under AACSB, the Major Field Tests (MFT) were stressed. Since 2003 SOBA has been trying to use the term values, and tie it into USCA’s strategic plan.

SOBA’s Assessment Committee was charged with doing exactly what the AAC members suggested in their reports to us. Although the School isn’t at that level yet, the hope is that they will be and they will be able to close the loop. The Dean indicated that some form of the “balanced scorecard” approach that was presented to the Strategic Planning Committee may be adopted to help promote the collection and use of results for continuous improvement.

Additionally, there is some concern in SOBA about the MFT scores, which seem to vary significantly from semester to semester. It is not clear why these scores fluctuate, and the department will look into this phenomenon. The improvement of majors’ technical skills has been an ongoing area for diligent improvement. Another area SOBA faculty have been dealing with is how to measure critical thinking. They are not comfortable with the measurements they have been getting. The Assessment Committee has been charged to look at this (and other) issues.

While stressing that overall SOBA’s current Assessment Report has made dramatic improvements, Committee members offered three overarching recommendations. First, SOBA should better articulate student learning outcomes in the area of global business. Second, SOBA should provide trend data in its assessment reports and consider the justification behind some of its targets; the phrase “curriculum reaffirmed” does not help make the case for continuous improvement. Finally, the Committee recommended a bulleted section to summarize how results are used.

Finally Dr. Rhodes explained that the next step in the assessment process would be that Dr. Hosch as the Director of Institutional Effectiveness would review the assessment report from the School of Business in the fall to see is all items discussed at this meeting were “fully addressed.” A final letter highlighting today’s meeting will be sent to Dr. Byington in the next few weeks. The Committee thanked Dr. Byington for his cooperation in this process and he stated he felt it was worthwhile.

After Dr. Byington left the meeting, the Committee discussed the final letter for SOBA. It was agreed the major points in the letter would be those noted above.

At 3:30 p.m., Dr. Rhodes introduced Professor Benjamin. She thanked him for attending and invited him to give the Committee an overview of what the Visual and Performing Arts department has been doing with regard to assessment.

Professor Benjamin stated that his department is a moving target, posed in part because of the multi-disciplinary nature of the major. Faculty found it difficult to adapt some of the outcomes at the objective level to their specific disciplines. At the discipline-level, efforts have been slightly more successful. The Theater program has been working with a pilot rubric developed by Prof. Longley, and the music faculty have spend significant time developing artifacts and aligning them with standards from NASM.
Through this discussion, the Committee developed three recommendations to assist the Department in advancing their assessment activities. First, the Department should return to and reground themselves in the three basic goals for students to a) know and understand, b) create and perform, and c) critique and respond. Second, the Department should adopt a common rating scale (a 5-point scale works well) and focus assessment efforts on senior-level courses. Finally, the Department should make a formal distinction between its assessment of learning in the major program and assessment of general education outcomes. There was some discussion of how general education assessment might be aligned with assessment in the major, although remain distinct.

Professor Benjamin thanked the Committee and when asked what AAC could do for him, he requested they reinforce what was talked about today. The Committee explained the process and that he would be receiving a letter stating today’s discussion. Also the Director of IE would be contacting him in the fall to review their assessment report to be sure all topics were fully addressed.

It was agreed the IE Director would contact the units on August 1st to set up meetings to review their new assessment reports.

**Next Meeting**
The next AAC meeting will be on April 27, 2007, 3:00 p.m., H&SS 201. Dr. William Jackson will meet with the Committee to discuss the Biology and Geology department’s assessment report.

Respectfully submitted,

Maureen Bergstrom
Academic Assessment Committee  
April 27, 2007  
Minutes

Present:    L. Rhodes (chair), W. Schweder, Y. Zhang, C. Eller, B. Pirkle  
           B. Hosch (ex officio), M. Bergstrom (guest)

Dr. Braden Hosch made an announcement before the beginning of the meeting. He informed the Committee members that he would be leaving USCA in July. He has accepted a position at Central Connecticut State University.

Dr. Rhodes opened the meeting at 3:00 p.m. and introduced the Committee’s invited guest, Dr. Bill Jackson, Biology and Geology department Chair.

The AAC members thanked Dr. Jackson and his faculty for their ongoing efforts in assessment, especially in the area of general education.

There were a few recommendations to the Biology and Geology department from the Assessment Committee. The AAC members stressed the point that these are recommendations only.

1. The Committee recommends that the Department identify measurable objectives for each of its six major goals for student learning.
2. The Committee recommends that the Department measure student learning to include outcomes from goals #1 (working in groups), #5 (performing analytical procedures), and #6 (analyzing data for their significance).
3. The Committee recommends that the Department rank order student performance in its six major outcomes to show outcomes students for which students demonstrate most and least proficiency.
4. The Committee recommends that future annual reports provide a bulleted summary of actions taken based on assessment results.

Dr. Rhodes explained that the next step in the assessment process would be that the Institutional Effectiveness Office would review the 2006-07 Program Review from the Department of Biology and Geology in the fall to see if all items discussed at this meeting were “fully addressed.” A final letter highlighting today’s meeting will be sent to Dr. Jackson in the next few weeks. The Committee thanked Dr. Jackson for his cooperation in this process.

Respectfully submitted,

Maureen Bergstrom