Academic Assessment Committee  
August 30, 2006  
Minutes

Present: C. Eller, Yilian Zhang, L. Rhodes, B. Pirkle, W. Schweder, B. Hosch, M. Bergstrom

Dr. Pirkle opened the meeting stating he had been asked by Dr. Trudy Henson, Chair of the Faculty Assembly, to call this first meeting of the Academic Assessment Committee. He said the first item of business was to nominate a chair. Dr. Lynne Rhodes was unanimously elected chair of the 2006-07 Academic Assessment Committee.

A binder was distributed to each member with information about the assessment committee, its responsibilities, USCA guidelines for assessment, and supporting documentation. Dr. Hosch provided a brief overview of materials in the binder.

The next item covered was scheduling meeting times for the remainder of the semester. The Fall 2006 schedule is as follows:

- September 20
- October 25
- November 15
- November 29

All meetings will take place at 4:00 p.m., H&SS 201.

The process of reviewing the Assessment Reports from the Program Reviews was discussed. The Committee will review five academic units this year: Biology, Business, English, Mathematical Sciences, and Visual and Performing Arts. The goal is that these reports will be reviewed by the end of 2006 and review letters sent to the units with the committee’s recommendations as well as an invitation to a meeting with the Committee. These meetings are hoped to be held at the beginning of 2007.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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

Dr. Rhodes turned the meeting over to Dr. Hosch.

Dr. Hosch provided a brief overview of materials in the assessment binder, distributed at the first AAC meeting in August 2006.

Dr. Hosch provided an overview of materials in this binder, which includes:
- University policy on assessment (Faculty Manual Section 1.2)
- USC Aiken's Strategic Plan on Assessment
- A Resource Manual for Accreditation (SACS)
- The Principles of Accreditation (SACS)
- Academic Program Review Guidelines and a rubric used by the Committee in evaluating the assessment programs of academic units.

The 2006-07 AAC members will be reviewing the following academic units over the next few months:

- Biology/Geology
- Business Administration
- English
- Mathematical Science
- Visual and Performing Arts

The rubric in the binder may be copied and used for each academic unit reviewed.

Dr. Hosch then discussed the Proposed USCA General Education Outcomes Goals. A committee has been established by the Executive Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs to come up with new initiatives for General Education at USCA.

The next item on the agenda was Dr. Hosch’s presentation on assessment of general education, which included an overview of results from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). This presentation can be found on the IE site at: http://ie.usca.edu/research/surveys/nsse/index.htm.

Dr. Rhodes requested that the Committee members review and discuss at the next Assessment Committee Meeting (October 25) the English and Math academic unit assessment reports. These reports are included in the Program Review documents distributed at the meeting. The rubric is attached to these minutes.

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, October 25, 2006, H&SS 201, at 4:00 p.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Maureen Bergstrom
Academic Program Review Guidelines
(due early October)

I. Data

Table 1 Faculty Load List of Faculty with Reassigned Time and Overloads (including internships and independent studies), with Explanations

- Table 2 Annual Degrees Awarded
- Table 3 Average Number of Students with Major or BIS Concentration
- Table 4 Enrollment Count and Average Class Size by Discipline

II. Department Mission, Goals, and Objectives

This section should also include Goals and Objectives for Student Learning Outcomes for 1) majors and 2) general education, where appropriate (these should be identifiably linked if not identical to institutional goals and objectives for general education). Goals are clear general statements about student learning, e.g. “Students will understand and apply basic research methods in [discipline].” Objectives should represent derived subsets of each goal and be measurable in scope. All statements should be phrased in the format “Students will …” or “Students will be able to …”

III. Assessment

This section should present an analysis of the results of the department’s efforts to assess its goals for student learning. Material in this section should be organized by the goals and objectives for learning outcomes listed in Section II in the following order:

- List the goal/objective for student learning
- Describe how the outcomes of this objective were assessed
- Present the findings; use appendices for data when necessary
- Describe actions taken that were prompted by the results

Each goal must have at least one measure of learning outcomes independent of student grades. Multiple assessments for each goal are preferable, and the primary measurements of student performance should be assessed by faculty or other qualified professionals. Additional supplementary indirect assessment data may include tabulated results of satisfaction surveys, focus groups, students’ self-assessments, and interviews, but such material, absent direct assessments of student competencies is not sufficient to constitute an adequate assessment program.

IV. Year in Review

- Accomplishments and Strengths
- Work in Progress
- Obstacles to Achieving Unit Goals
- Long-range Plans

V. Needs--Provide Justification and Projected Costs

- Personnel
- Equipment/Furniture (non technology)
- Facilities
- Technology
- Other

Address Strategic Planning Goals and Objectives throughout, as appropriate
Characteristics of Unit Assessment Report

This checklist is based directly on the guidelines for preparing Academic Program Reviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Unit:</th>
<th>Date Reviewed:</th>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Missing</th>
<th>Approaches Guidelines</th>
<th>Meets Guidelines</th>
<th>Exceeds Guidelines</th>
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**Goals**

- Goals are stated clearly.

- Goals are about student learning.

- Goals are formulated with "students" as the grammatical subject.

Comments:

**Objectives**

- Objectives derive from each goal.

- Objectives are measurable in scope.

- Objectives are formulated with "students" as the grammatical subject.

Comments:

**Measurement**

- Outcomes of objectives have been measured.

- Measures for each outcome include one measure independent of student grades.

- Measurements have been made by faculty or other qualified professionals.

Comments:

**Findings**

- All findings are presented.

- Data from findings appear in tables and/or appendices.

- Findings about supplementary assessment data (e.g. satisfaction surveys, focus groups, self-assessments) are presented when appropriate.

Comments:

**Actions Taken**

- Actions prompted by the results are described.

Comments:
The Committee members reviewed the Departments of English and the Mathematical Science Assessment Reports.

The opening section of the English Departments Assessment Report reports on the General Education statements. Dr. Hosch noted to the committee that a decision would need to be made later in the semester about how to evaluate the Gen Ed statements. This will require perhaps an extra piece to the Review Rubric now used for the Assessment Reports.

Dr. Hosch collected all the rubrics from the members and will summarize Committee members’ ratings. Based on the Committee’s review today, he will provide the Committee Chair with an initial draft of the letters to be sent to the Chairs of the two Departments. As the Committee Chair, Dr. Rhodes will make revisions to these letters and then solicit additional feedback from Committee members. Once a final draft of each letter has been compiled, the Dr. Rhodes will ask the Committee to vote to approve each letter. Following this approval by the Committee, the letters will be sent to the Chairs with an invitation to attend a meeting with the Academic Assessment Committee.

Dr. Rhodes requested that the Committee members review and discuss at the next Assessment Committee Meeting (November 15) the School of Business and Visual and Performing Arts academic unit assessment reports. These reports are included in the Program Review documents distributed at the meeting.

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, November 15, 2006, H&SS 201, at 4:00 p.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Maureen Bergstrom
Academic Assessment Committee  
November 15, 2006  
Minutes

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

Dr. Rhodes was unable to attend today’s meeting. Dr. Pirkle acted in her place.

The Committee members reviewed the School of Business and the Department of Visual and Performing Arts Assessment Reports.

The School of Business uses different language describing goals and objectives. Dr. Hosch wanted the members to be aware of this difference, but it shouldn’t be considered a problem. The members agreed the goals and objectives were stated clearly. However, there were a few items Dr. Hosch will write into the review letter. The Academic Assessment Committee members would suggest including:

- the rubric and surveys  
- a brief listing or summary of the actions the School of Business took based on their assessment  
- explain the term “global business” listed as objectives on page 11 and 12.

Dr. Hosch may include comments about:

- the benchmarks listed, why 75%?  
- terminology (noted above)

The Visual and Performing Arts Department’s review letter from the Assessment Committee will include:

- distinguishing between general education and the major. It was not clear if some of their goals were discussing gen ed or what they hoped to accomplish in the major.  
- goals and objectives the first one is strong. Measurements and other objectives need work.  
- what are their findings with their assessment instruments?

Dr. Hosch collected all the rubrics from the members and will summarize committee members’ ratings. Based on the Committee’s review today, he will begin working on the review letters that will be sent to the units. These letters will first be shown to Dr. Rhodes and then the committee members.

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, November 29, 2006, H&SS 201, at 4:00 p.m.  
The committee will review the Biology department’s report at that meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Maureen Bergstrom
Academic Assessment Committee  
November 29, 2006  
Minutes

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

Dr. Rhodes opened the meeting at 4:05 p.m.

The Committee members reviewed the Department of Biology’s Assessment Report. Overall, the members were pleased with the Biology/Geology’s report.

Goals
Dr. Hosch reported that there is a discrepancy in the number of goals listed in the report. Page 4 listed four goals, but there are actually six goals, according to the Department Chair. The two extra goals are listed in the appendix in the survey results. Aside from the missing goals, Committee members agreed that those stated were reasonable.

Objectives
Objectives were not listed following each goal in the initial presentation of the Department’s outcomes for students – the presentation of general education outcomes appeared stronger than those in the major in this regard. Some Committee members indicated that specific objectives could be found in various places in the appendix presenting assessment data but they had to work to find them and some objectives appeared to be missing.

Measurement
For areas in which measurements were provided, these evaluations were quite good. The report clearly provided evidence that selected outcomes in general education and in the major had been measured by faculty or other qualified professionals – in the case of Major Field Test results, these measures are even compared to a national benchmark. Several measurements were either missing or indicated to be under development.

Findings
Overall findings were well presented, although in some areas, the results presented were confusing. Committee members were unable to see how the results collected in Table 3 of the Appendix (p. 5) translated into Figure 2 on the same page and its interpretation that student skills appeared strongest in the area of outlining future implications.

Actions Taken
Actions taken were presented – the Department has formed a departmental assessment committee and made some curricular modifications based on assessment results. Plans appear to be in the works to establish a better baseline with Major Field Test results, and the Senior Project has evolved nicely. A simple bulleted list of these items in the body of the report would usefully highlight these important activities to readers.

Additionally, the Committee observed that the presentations of student research noted in the “Achievements” section of the report would be valuable to link to departmental outcomes and presented as an annual number indicating mastery of research-related outcomes. Additionally, if the Department has data about alumni job or grad school placements, these would be useful to report.

Dr. Hosch collected all the rubrics from the members and will summarize committee members’ ratings. The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,  
Maureen Bergstrom
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 Fortron 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
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