Members present: Christine Shaw (Chair), Noel Adams, Sandra Cleveland, Joyce Wolburg, M. Behnam Ghasemzadeh, Christine Krueger, Gary Meyer, Kristy Nielson, Stephanie Quade, Jim Richie, Peter Toumanoff, Chae Yi

Absent: Kathleen Ford, Matthew Hurley, Joan Whipp

Guests: Mike Monahan, Sharron Ronco

Approval of Minutes: The minutes of the meeting for December 14, 2011 were approved without corrections by consensus.

Continuing Business

University Core of Common Studies: Charges from Academic Senate

The discussion began with a review of the questions posed by the Academic Senate: (a) what do we know about student learning as related to the core? (b) are the nine knowledge areas still appropriate? (c) does the structure of the core facilitate learning?

Initially it was noted that the nine knowledge areas exhibit breadth and depth qualities and are aligned with the mission of the university. The discussion moved quickly to the question of assessment. It was noted that the present indirect assessment process is inadequate and a more objective, direct assessment procedure is needed. Some discussion regarding assessment tools embedded in core courses versus assessment of students at the senior level took place.

Dr. Christine Kreuger then explained that a pilot assessment of the program learning outcome concerned with communication was piloted a few years ago. The pilot assessment included a series of three exercises that involved writing by the students and were then read and evaluated by trained readers. Unfortunately, assessment processes similar to the pilot case require funding, which was not allocated. The funding level suggested to perform the proposed assessment ranged from $2,000 to $5,000.

The assessment structure was then discussed. There are four program learning outcomes. Each program learning outcome has a set of performance indicators (and corresponding rubrics) The performance indicators also provide a bridge between the program learning outcomes and the nine knowledge areas.

The meeting continued with a discussion of the responsibilities of the Core Curriculum Review Committee and the role of the Board of Undergraduate Studies. While the CCRC is responsible for the core curriculum, the UBUS has been asked to consider what can be done to aid in maintaining and assessing the core curriculum.

Dr. Mike Monahan described a preliminary plan for assessment that includes embedded assessment of the nine knowledge areas. A mandate requiring assessment in core courses may be instituted to insure that two knowledge areas per year are assessed. Then, seniors would be identified to assess the four program learning outcomes.

It was noted that there are problems with the core. The Diverse Cultures knowledge area has a large number of loosely connected courses; core courses are often taught by adjunct part-time faculty. It was also felt that the university core needs more exposure and funding for assessment. Finally, it is difficult to identify seniors for assessment of the program learning outcomes, particularly in the College of Arts and Sciences because the required senior experience will be ending.
Summary

The nine knowledge areas to illustrate breadth and depth. There may be issues with the knowledge areas; however, UBUS does not feel qualified to address the nine areas and, in principle, it is not appropriate for the board to answer that question.

What do we know about student learning? The answer relies on assessment. The process of assessment has been difficult to implement. The university core points toward the mission of the university. Assessment can demonstrate accomplishment of the mission and the assessment data can be used to promote the university. The assessment results are a crucial starting point for modifying the core of common studies.

Next Steps

The board agreed that new perspectives on the core are needed that also salvage what has already been done. The board will look into the past proposals for funding core assessment and the rubrics for the performance indicators. UBUS will also look at the Knowledge area rubrics being developed. Dr. Gary Meyer encouraged all board members to read the article, "How do We Know if We are Doing Well?"

Meeting was adjourned at 2:30

Respectfully submitted by Jim Richie