

## University Assessment Committee

April 1, 2016

9:00 AM to 10:30 AM

**Present:** Karen Andeen, Susan Bay, Jodi Blahnik, Marilyn Bratt, Karen Evans, Stephen Guastello, Noreen Lephardt, Laura MacBride, Maureen McAvoy, Sharron Ronco, Guy Simoneau, John Su, Fred Sutkiewicz, Pol Vandavelde, Baolin Wan, Joyce Wolburg, Brittney Wyatt, and Jean Zaroni

Guests: Linda Salchenberger and Mike Politano

The meeting was called to order at 9:00. Reflection by Karen Andeen

- **Approval of minutes from March 4th meeting.**

Brittney Wyatt distributed the minutes at the meeting and were approved with minor edits.

- **Integration of assessment into academic program review (Linda Salchenberger).**

Linda Salchenberger discussed the Program Review process. She shared two handouts and explained the history of the process at MU. She noted that Program Review was designed to advance the goals and priorities of the strategic plan, *Beyond Boundaries*, and that it is integrated with the annual budgeting and planning process.

The current practice is to ask each unit to identify three strategic issues, which are then the focus of the self study and the site visit. The process start-to-finish is 18 months. Programs are reviewed again in a 6-year cycle.

The first step is to meet with the unit administrators and identify the strategic issues. Reviewers are then selected; the visit is scheduled; the self-study is written; and the reviewers come to campus for the site visit, meet with the Program Review Council to provide preliminary findings, and write their report with recommendations. The Council then meets with the unit to vet the reviewers' comments and recommendations. An action plan is created with a timeline for monitoring progress in implementing action steps.

Various questions were asked including, "At what point in program review should assessment data be incorporated?" Salchenberger noted that in the development of self-study, the unit should contact Ronco and the UAC. Ronco noted that although they should contact her, they do not, and she asked if it is appropriate to take the initiative to coordinate with the unit. Salchenberger had no objection and suggested that the best time in the process to coordinate is when the unit

receives information from OIRA. The next academic unit for program review is History.

Ronco also noted the UAC's desire to know if the unit has made changes as a result of assessment. This reporting has been uneven in the past, and the UAC wants a process that produces evidence regarding where assessment was used to change the curriculum and how the data was evaluated. The current process is not generating this data.

Additional questions arose regarding what the Program Review Council can do to emphasize the importance of assessment and to make recommendations if the unit is not taking it seriously. Salchenberger noted that the Council will look to see that assessment is being addressed and will make a recommendation that is part of the action plan if something is needed. Likewise, if assessment is done well, the report can say that. As for post-hoc evaluation, it will be up to the Provost and the Council to decide if the unit is remiss.

A question arose regarding the interface between external accreditation and program review. Salchenberger noted that the ideal timing is usually mid cycle so that a unit is not undergoing two forms of review simultaneously. However, some units have benefitted from having Program Review immediately prior to an accreditation visit in hopes of identifying a problem and finding a solution prior to the visit. An alternate idea is a modified Program Review that focuses on an area outside of the accreditation visit. The Council meets with deans to help strategize the timing and to agree upon a process that adds value.

Salchenberger noted that the Program Review self-study should be the same format as the accreditation self study to make the two processes less labor intensive. She also noted that academic support units need to follow a different self-study format.

The UAC expressed their appreciation to Salchenberger for her insights.

- **Updates (Chair).**

This item was held until the next meeting in the interest of time.

- **Content of this year's IAR (Institutional Assessment Report- attached).**

Ronco asked for feedback to be sent via email in the interest of time.

- **New problem-based assessment plan from Physics Department (guest Mike Politano).**

Ronco noted that the Psychics Department has taken a different approach to assessment, and the UAC's role is to give advice rather than to approve it.

Mike Politano discussed the plan, which was distributed to committee members via email.

He noted that the department is reaching a point where faculty have a good balance of new ideas and old wisdom. Thus, it is a good time to take a hard look at the curriculum and begin a new process that can bring about improvement.

The effort was driven in part by a student who did not get into a graduate program at his desired school as well as a recognition that improving the program may result in higher GRE scores and greater success in acceptance into graduate programs. The department raised two questions:

**Q1: How well do students retain knowledge they learned in their foundational freshman and sophomore classes?**

**RQ2: Are there any significant gaps in knowledge and skills that make our graduates less competitive in their respective career choices?**

Politano took the UAC members through the logic of posing these questions, the planning for measurement, the anticipated action steps that will result, as well as a timeline for when the process will be complete.

Because there are small numbers of students in the program, the Department estimated that data would be collected over a three-year period and that years four and five would be spent revising the curriculum.

The UAC offered feedback first by congratulating the Department on their work and supporting the effort to look at high impact teaching practices. The CTL was recommended as a partner for professional development around teaching areas.

A concern was expressed with regard to measuring freshmen and sophomores, who might change majors and leave the program. However, there is little movement in the major so using a freshmen course makes sense.

The lengthy timeline was noted with a recommendation to shorten it in order to change the curriculum sooner. The lack of learning outcomes was also noted and Ronco observed that this problem-based approach is an interesting departure from programs that initially start with LOs.

The UAC again thanked Politano for the Department's work.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:30.

Respectfully submitted,  
Joyce Wolburg