University Assessment Committee
Meeting Minutes
March 30, 2012

Attendees: Caroline DiPipi-Hoy, Heather Garrison, Patti Kashner, Jamie Thomas, Kelly Harrison, Pamela Kramer Ertel, Paul Creamer, Bonnie Green, Debra Ballinger, Mary Tod Gray, Mike Jochen, Yun Kim, Adam McGlynn, Joann Stryker, Laura Waters

- Minutes from February 2012 were approved.

- **Dr. Waters led the critical thinking small group activity.** How do we, the UAC, effectively communicate assessment information? The compiled responses to the “take home” activity were distributed for review. The committee broke into five small discussion groups to address the focus question.

- Group 1. Focused on addressing prospective and current student audience
  - Website - 2 separate tracks of information
  - A to Z non-detailed facts. For example go to R and find information pertaining to Reading.
  - Categorized by employer desired skill sets (ex: Applied Math, Writing)
  - DISCUSSION:
    - We would have to establish the goal for the websites – informative, marketing, etc.
    - Could assign visiting the site as a class assignment.
    - Create videos for posting
    - Put up all data – clearly link for students how we are improving
    - Collaborate with the Student Senate

Discussion of strategies to address the assessment results in the critical thinking packet. At another institution established a list of courses that were writing intensive. Limit the class size in these courses. Bring strategies forward for action – another PASSHE institution requires several writing intensive courses and these are capped at 25. Regardless if it was tried before, try again.

- Group 2. Focused on all audiences from three different viewpoints.
  - Self Study On-line for faculty, staff, and administration. Faculty always trying to improve – can use information to set individual goals to address needs identified by assessment results. The self-study is a way to share information and to hold accountable for knowing.
  - Acronym – **ARCI**. For each assessment identify who is Accountable, Responsible, Consulted and Informed.
  - Charted out Who? How? And What?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who</th>
<th>How</th>
<th>What</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrators</td>
<td>Graphs, Tables, Research</td>
<td>Comparisons Assessing Effectiveness; Relate to Research on topic</td>
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<td>Faculty/Department Chairs</td>
<td>In service workshops, CETL</td>
<td>Changes in data by year and by major</td>
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<td>Faculty (General Education Committee, etc.)</td>
<td>CETL</td>
<td>Data across majors</td>
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<td>Students</td>
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<td>Why and how data is used and how impacts their education.</td>
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### DISCUSSION:

- **Self study** – A mechanism to share information and hold accountable for knowing information and taking action. This information can then be used by individual faculty to set annual goals addressing identified needs. We can each individually decide what we are going to do to do the best that we can. Individual Goals to Departmental Goals to College Goals to Institutional Goals. Thinking about where you want to go as a teacher is translated to the students through the course work.
- First step in behavioral change is developing awareness.
- Nee to move forward from here is the data to the so what...
- Should these be part of strategic plan? Yes, the strategic plan is a living document and items can be added to it.

### Group 3. Focused on looking at past efforts to inform future efforts.

- What common methods have we used in the past that were effective (how effective)?
- Presentations to “Captive Audience” such as:
  - Curriculum Committee
  - GE
  - Provost’s Leadership Team
  - President Council
  - University Meeting
- Pamphlet
- “Outside the box”
- Less is more!!
- Leverage
  - 5 year Program Review
  - Assessment Consultants – part of Professional Development Workgroup proposal.
  - Required Training Visit
  - Part of New Faculty Orientation (any touch point). Evangelize the data delivery

### DISCUSSION:

- In the past some things have worked, and some have not worked so well. Let’s investigate what has worked and why it has worked.
- Less is more. Think in terms of planting a seed. Do a presentation and follow up with brochure and website links.
- We need to be creative in our approach.
• The communication chain is broken right now.
• Put these ideas where people will come across it – think about posting results/talking points in a bathroom stall.
• Consider all stakeholders including the Council of Trustees.

• Group 4. Focused on General how to’s.
  • Easy to read written documents that are non threatening – i.e. more white space/ look “official” provided in both email and hard copy formats.
  • Faculty advisors should share information with students – i.e., incoming advisee
  • Student Government Association meetings and student newspaper
  • College meeting
  • Members of UAC Report out to their department
  • UAC Co-chairs assign topic to report out and require members to bring back comments
  • Develop something consistent to talk about (talking points; bullet list; key info, etc.)
  • Develop recommendations that could/might be acted on
  • UAC should work with Public relations to create a something glossy to share annually about the work of the UAC.

• DISCUSSION:
  • There have not been focus groups with students. There should be.
  • Make documents easy read with no odd fonts.
  • Leverage PASSHE Academy as much as possible.

• Group 5. Focused on addressing the Faculty Audience.
  • Use the University and APSCUF faculty meetings for reviewing results
  • Ask for volunteers for a task force to
    • Develop an action plan to:
      1. Engage faculty and students in focus groups to elicit ideas about standards and practice with critical thinking
      2. Make recommendations for curriculum changes

• DISCUSSION:
  • We might be just setting the stones in place for critical thinking to happen later.
  • We know the problem and we know the issue, now let's actually do something about it.
  • We need to do X to do Y; we need action first for change to get there.
  • There is often not a lot of dialogue for a teacher to see a student throughout their whole educational experience. A particular faculty member may just see students in freshmen year, or just in senior year so the change and learning is not apparent to individual faculty.

Dr. Waters reminded everyone as members of the committee, please go out and talk about the importance of these results.

• Upcoming Assessments.
We are scheduled to administer the Proficiency Profile this summer to our incoming freshmen and during the 2012-13 Academic Year to our seniors. We need to come up with ways to administer to our seniors. The Performance Measure Selection Committee has selected the Proficiency Profile as one of our institutional performance metrics indicating the integral importance of student learning to ESU.

Suggestions included:
- Contact department chairs and faculty teaching senior courses in 2012-13 to ask for a 50 minute class period to administer.
- Create a talking points document on this topic and have UAC members discuss with colleagues.
- Ask faculty to schedule the Proficiency Profile on the syllabus.

**Current Assessments.**

The Employee Satisfaction Survey closes Monday. If you have not taken this yet, please do.

The Graduating Senior Survey is open. Students who filed an intent to graduate have been invited to take this survey. The survey remains open through mid-April.

The Snyder Survey is going on right now also. Dr. McGlynn suggested we find a way to use aggregated information at ESU to communicate the faculty work effort.

**Next Full UAC Meeting is April 27th, 2012**
Critical Thinking

Resources and Results:

1) Expanded Definition adopted by UAC 1/25/2010
2) Learning Gains Report – results must be posted on College Portrait this year as part of our inclusion in the Voluntary System of Accountability initiative
3) DIRECT MEASURE - ESU’s PP Results for Reading and Critical Thinking – scores and criterion based
4) INDIRECT MEASURE – Fall 2011 Graduating Student Survey question 35.
5) INDIRECT MEASURE – Spring 2011 National Survey of Student Engagement questions 2 and 3.

Small Group Activity:

1) What is this packet of information telling you about ESU and our students’ critical thinking skills?

Main Points:
- Freshmen enter ESU and seniors, surprisingly, still can’t synthesize or evaluate (levels 2 and 3).
- There is room for more growth in critical thinking skills in general between freshman and senior year.
- ESU graduates overwhelmingly describe themselves as prepared or better in critical thinking. They also report doing assignments related to critical thinking at the same or slightly higher level as peer institutions, especially in the senior year.
- Possible conclusions include 1) our students have too high an opinion of their skills or 2) standardized tests are not very good at measuring critical thinking.
- Incoming students are on-par with benchmark
- Seniors gained a slight proficiency over freshmen, but ended up less proficient overall than seniors at comparable institutions
- ESU is starting this comparison from the onset at a disadvantage or 2 to four percentage points for numbers of incoming freshmen students within each of the three categories (two points lower on proficient and marginal scores, for points worse on not proficient scores)
- ESU is making a difference in a student’s critical thinking ability (gaining from 0% to 2% proficient, 6% to 12% marginal and dropping from 94% to 86% not proficient).
- Too many of our students are graduating without critical thinking skills at 77%
- By definition, the students don’t perform as well as needed….HOWEVER, asking freshmen and seniors the same question doesn’t reflect true change. We may actually do a good job of educating about critical thinking – so much
so that seniors can more accurately self-assess their critical thinking abilities – and thus respond lower than they may have done as freshmen.

2) Who at ESU should this information be shared with?

**Audience:**
- Everyone! General University Meeting would be a good start.
- Workshops for Faculty—with ideas for incorporating these skills into content classes.
- Department/Programs—to share as a group how we are doing in each discipline.
- Administration
- Special Committee formed to improve critical thinking skills (not sure if something similar to this exists at ESU)
- Prospective students (not technically “at ESU”)
- Student support staff involved in working with students in direct capacities
- General Education Committee
- Deans and department chairs
- UAC
- Gen Ed
- Provost Leadership Team
- students
- Graduates
- Incoming students

3) For each audience listed above, in what format should the information be shared?

**Format:**
- Presentation (at University Meeting)
- Workshop (maybe with CETL)
- Meetings (committee members with deans or divisions)
- Send in current form to committee members
- Raw data with summary
- Mostly summary, with assertion that information is backed up by data
- Faculty – hard copy with simplified visuals and numerical data
- Student support staff – hard copy with simplified visuals and numerical data
- Succinct one-page summary combining multiple sources, with examples of critical thinking skills and activities that can assess CT
- Summarized results related to university-wide student learning outcomes
- Administration: written report
- Faculty: forum/large meeting
- Students: advisor meeting
- Students – alternative methods for sharing this data, perhaps through the student senate
In a concise format, that includes the scores (numeric data), charts, to help visualize, and short analysis that distills the essence of the information. A brief presentation would suffice. A more detailed handout with supporting information may be appropriate for the committee to consider during discussion of the information, guiding us on how to proceed with the information.

- Report prepared by Jeff’s Committee
- Info should be shared succinctly with a plan of action to improve scores. KISS (Keep it simple, silly!)
- Info needs to be shared with decision making bodies so that action can be agreed upon and improvement plans implemented.
- Email main points, highlights without using too many numeric figures.

4) For each audience listed above, who should be providing the information:

**Information Provider:**

- Those who collect the results seem to be the point person?
- University Assessment committee - the UAC is a representative body of ESU constituents that all have stake in ESU’s success. The UAC should present itself as a non-biased group of individuals presenting fact-based information and recommended activities for improvement.
- Faculty – Dean/Department Chairs with information provided by UAC
- Student support staff – Department Chairs with information provided by UAC
- Office of Academic and Institutional Effectiveness
- Administration: provost
- Students: individual advisors
- A member of faculty and administration, together
- Laura Waters as Chair of UAC
- Orientation leaders

An email response:

There seems to be a disconnect between what the results say our seniors can do and what they believe they are able to do based on the results of the Proficiency Profile. This is a positive in one manner in that our students are confident in the critical thinking skills they possess and how we have educated them. Based on the NSSE results it appears we could be revising the writing assignments we currently require to better achieve some of the competencies. However, the conversation should first focus on the source of this disconnect.