

Minutes, April and May 06
CHFA SOA Committee

April 11 minutes:

- 1) Report from the Higher Learning Commission meeting.
 - a) Reineke reported that the transition in titles from North Central Association to Higher Learning Commission appears to be almost complete. Although “NCA” is visible in organization texts, the font size is smaller than last year. At the meeting site itself, “NCA” is all but invisible in official oral communications of the meeting.
 - b) Reineke reported on the session on “Assessment for the Future.” This session consisted of a panel offered by national leaders on assessment. They reported on a retreat in which they had participated which focused on addressing the question of why, after the call for assessment has been heard in higher education for twenty years, it hasn’t taken hold. They held the retreat because of urgency associated with assessment: universities must engage it before Federal and State governments take control of assessment away from them. They made three observations:
 - i) Senior leadership is key. This includes support at the very top (the President). Crucial also is the support of faculty leaders. Faculty leaders need to be identified and supported. Faculty members also need to be permitted to fail – not every try at doing assessment will work.
 - ii) Also of critical importance to the ongoing success of assessment is a faculty reward structure. When faculty members are doing assessment, they are not engaged in teaching innovations or direct course support and they are not working on their scholarship. There are real costs to faculty. Unfortunately, university leaders have not recognized these costs. A key reason assessment has not progressed in the past twenty years is that faculty costs have not been acknowledged and faculty have not been compensated for their investment in assessment. If universities want faculty to assess, administrators will need to tell them so – and in the same kind of “language” that administrators tell faculty to excel in the classroom and to be productive as scholars.
 - iii) Faculty members need resources to do assessment. This includes release time from teaching for persons taking key roles in assessment initiatives. It also includes funding for faculty development (conference attendance, project support). Web-based assessment management programs help faculty but cost money to set up and develop.
 - c) The assessment log was described in a presentation by Defiance College. Reineke is trying to obtain the actual log sample because the PowerPoint slide was too small to read the log text. The committee liked the idea. At Defiance, an assessment log may be printed out from a web site. An empty log page is also brought to every department meeting. Whenever an assessment conversation

takes place, it is logged. At the end of the year, Defiance faculty are finding that they have an ongoing record of assessment to record in their yearly reports that is richer and more regular than that which they could record if they were only recording minutes of “official” assessment discussions in the departments.

- d) A handout on simplifying data analysis was distributed. The committee worked through the samples. They immediately could see how this handout could be useful in departments in order to offer practice in writing outcomes. Reineke will post this handout on the web site.
 - e) The PowerPoint presentation from Northern Arizona was distributed to the committee. Reineke noted that their entire university has pursued exactly the same type of assessment process/upgrade that we have pursued in CHFA. This is strong affirmation that CHFA is on the right track.
 - f) Reineke summarized the session on graduate outcomes offered by Oklahoma State University. They have a very effective mechanism for developing graduate level assessment. As we add graduate assessment to the CHFA upgrade, some of their ideas might be of use.
- 2) Interim Dean Bubser asks that the SOA Committee consult about the SOA Annual Report with their department heads before disappearing for the summer. Committee members reported that they had either already done so or were about to do so. SOA Committee members are confident that the work of their faculty will be recorded in the annual reports this year.
 - 3) Interim Dean Bubser also indicated that graduate outcomes need to get on the upgrade radar screen next year. Committee members reported that they had either already started to do this in the course of their overall SOA upgrade project or had already discussed adding this focus next year.
 - 4) University SOA Committee Report: Reineke reported on the first meeting of the group. The Director of Academic Assessment, Donna Vinton, distributed a grid. At the meeting, committee members listed stakeholders with investments in assessment on the grid. Committee members then addressed stakeholder questions about assessment and listed what would count as good/helpful information for stakeholders. Although “faculty” were on the stakeholder list, Donna Vinton indicated that faculty perceptions about assessment would not be discussed. Other stakeholders such as parents, legislators, Regents, etc. were discussed.
 - 5) Other business: Reineke reported that she had attended two computer workshops for developing the web site for assessment. Reinhold Bubser also covered costs of creating a homepage logo for the web site that features the UNI logo. This will accommodate concerns on campus that all UNI web sites carry the logo. The logo also enables the site to blend well with the rest of the CHFA

site as well as with the university assessment site. She has started putting the materials up on the web. The site will be ready for fall. When we start featuring monthly segments on assessment in the CHFA newsletter, we will be able to direct faculty in the college to the web site for further information.

May 1, 2006 Minutes:

- 1) The committee discussed the FAQ submissions and made suggestions for revisions. Ken, John, and Gretta will be submitting their submissions shortly. These will go on the CHFA website. We will also see if we can feature one FAQ in each CHFA newsletter next year. We also came up with two new FAQs for work on next fall:
 - a) How is faculty evaluation kept separate from program evaluation? If I am the only professor teaching a class in which students work on a specific program outcome, am I at risk of being accused of poor teaching if students do poorly when assessed on this outcome?
 - b) How do we help students take assessment seriously? How/why do we explain assessment to students?

2) We discussed plans for next year: are we on track with the upgrade calendar? How is the development of direct measures going? Does the committee need further work with Allen, other resources in order to assist our colleagues? Department reports of progress:

Communication Studies: Faculty members have chosen portfolio collection and have already alerted faculty who will be participating in the project so that they may incorporate portfolio preparation into their fall courses.

Art: Base line measures for the BA of Fine Arts admission and scholarships have been developed with rubric evaluation. The goal is to link incoming assessment with juried assessment at the Senior level. The initial review led to interesting conversations about rubriced measures and faculty advocacy for particular program candidates. Advocacy appears to assess measures that may not be explicated on paper. Addressing such assessment and systematizing it is a future project.

Theatre: Design majors are working on portfolios. Youth theatre students have a project and teacher work samples will be scored. Performance majors pose a challenge – Seniors each need an opportunity to perform in a major role in a directed, public performance. Adjudicating student needs for performance opportunities that will showcase their abilities is a challenge because plays are not typically chosen with assessment opportunities as a priority.

Communicative Disorders: Faculty members have chosen three measures. There will be a scoring document with the clinical students, writing samples (technical reports), and an effort to link course content with clinic experience.

Philosophy and Religion: Each program has completed its setting of goals and outcomes for the next two years. Each has selected one goal on which to focus in the coming year and this week the faculty chose a direct measure for the two outcomes. Philosophy will be assessing knowledge in philosophy of science in two courses. Religion will be assessing reading skills. Reading comprehension for undergraduates in religion is set as a goal of 30-40%; MA students 40-60%, and Ph.D. students 60-80%. Students need to learn advanced reading skills in order to attain these goals.

Music: Music is working on developing an assessment mechanism for recitals in the performance major. They already jury these recitals but have never conducted formal assessment with a rubric in order to create a feedback loop back into the major curriculum.

English: English is preparing portfolios and working on a mechanism for faculty participation in assessment of these portfolios.

Modern Languages: Did not report.

Reineke observed that the preceding conversation about assessment in each department really showed genuine assessment in action at a mature level of understanding and reflection. The committee and the college departments have made huge strides in the past year.

- 2) The committee briefly discussed SOA support for next year. Richard indicated that some expertise in survey writing would be helpful and also assistance in posting the alumni survey on line. Allan expressed interest in how groups can be assessed as groups. Rubric creation was mentioned by several persons as a concern. Reineke stated that she had been collecting information on rubric creation and had some good sources. Since she will be returning to full-time faculty status, it will be a challenge to keep moving forward with assessment guidance since she will have less time for assessment work than she did this past year.
- 3) University SOA Committee report: Interim Provost Lubker addressed the committee. Reineke was late in arriving due to another meeting but determined that he had made points similar to those he has made when he has met with our committee. Registrar Patton advocated for Federal testing in higher education, saying that it is not only inevitable but also apparently needed. He likened such an approach in higher education to No Child Left Behind. Committee representative, Barry Wilson, argued vigorously against NCLB – at any level. Committee representative Jerry Smith argued for testing, and lamented the poor teaching of some UNI faculty. Reineke shared her views on faculty-driven assessment and the need to achieve

faculty buy-in and support for any assessment tool (national test or other) prior to using it on campus. Director of Academic Assessment, Donna Vinton, said this was an interesting discussion. She mentioned forming a reading group over the summer on Bok's new book on underachieving students.