

Minutes, CSOA, Monday, Dec. 5, 2005, 3:00 p.m.

Attending: Baughman, Nelson, Berghammer, Cooley, Reineke

Regrets: Colburn, Chatham-Carpenter, Burkhardt

1) The committee read the memo (attachment separate from these minutes) from Interim Dean Bubser which was a result of conversations among the department heads following our meeting with them on November 9. In the memo, the department heads ask that we create a calendar/timeline of baseline expectations for implementation of SOA this year and then project that timeline over the next several years in ways that enable every department in CHFA to successfully attain an upgrade of their SOA plan and processes.

The committee spent most of the meeting discussing the memo and ways to develop the calendar. Reineke will draft a timeline before the holiday break and send it to committee members for preliminary feedback. Reineke will draw on Allen for charts that may accompany the timeline as appendices. In the experience of the committee, the charts demystify the SOA process and enable faculty to perceive that SOA can readily be accomplished. Reineke will make adjustments to the timeline based on recommendations she receives during the break and will bring the latest draft to the January meeting. At our January meeting we will finalize the timeline because we want our departments to be able to see the timeline by the beginning of February.

We also discussed the importance of getting a sense of how many departments will be at the baseline listed on our master calendar and how many may be a bit ahead of the baseline this year. As we develop the baseline, we want to make sure that every department can meet the baseline this year so that no department is left behind. In planning the multi-year aspects of the calendar, we also want to anticipate with some degree of reliability what our departments can accomplish each year for the next several years. In support of these concerns, over break, each committee member will sketch a timeline specific to his/her department to bring to the January meeting. Through comparing notes, we will be able to create a master timeline that tracks an SOA upgrade schedule to which all departments in CHFA can successfully adhere. By looking at what each of us has predicted for our departments, we can reach common ground on what is realistically possible for all CHFA departments to accomplish.

In sum, our homework for break will be 1) Reineke sends timeline sketch to committee; 2) each committee member sends any recommendations for changes that immediately come to mind to Reineke [in order that she can bring a revised draft to our January meeting]; 3) each committee member sketches a timeline specific to his/her department to bring to the January meeting. Variances from the master timeline can therefore be noted and discussed.

The memo from Interim Dean Bubser also suggests the development of a CHFA SOA manual. This will be discussed at future meetings.

2) Complete discussion of Allen, Chapter 4.

The committee began discussing Chapter 4 because the planning component of it is directly relevant to the development of an SOA timeline. Charts from Chapter 4 can prove helpful to committee members who are trying to sketch attainable goals for SOA to share at our January meeting. We will complete our discussion of Chapter 4 at our January meeting, in conjunction with our review of the timelines.

We discussed the ethics section of Chapter 4 and considered ways in which our departments can become informed of these guidelines. It was suggested that the university assessment committee may wish to develop guidelines held in common across campus. Reineke is a member of that committee. When it starts having scheduled meetings, she will share this idea with them.

3) Debriefing on Meeting with Heads. We discussed two points from that meeting.

- a) Faculty members don't understand the buzz words and don't want to understand these words. The CSOA could be very helpful in acquainting faculty in their departments with the key vocabulary and the rationale for its use. A glossary will be helpful, especially if it is shared across campus.

In response to this point, Reineke reported that the graduate students with whom she is working this semester on assessment for the Office of Academic Assessment have compiled a glossary. However, there have been some problems with getting it up on the website. We may wish to draw on that when it is available or work on our own for a handbook.

- b) When SOA is linked with the curriculum, faculty who teach highly specialized courses (often at the core of their research passions) may feel threatened. They may be concerned that their courses will be dropped because students do not attain key outcomes in them. The CSOA needs to address this fear and to figure out ways to assist faculty in justifying and enhancing their courses through the SOA process. Achieving faculty buy-in will be difficult if colleagues start circling the wagons around their courses.

The committee considered ways in which this concern could be addressed, perhaps by including it in our FAQ list. It occurs to us that while a single, advanced course might look vulnerable, if such courses are considered as a "cluster" within the major, they may collectively achieve specified advanced outcomes. For example, some critical thinking rubrics identify advanced skills

of which students are capable only at the end of their college careers. When faculty align the curriculum with outcomes, they may make an effort to look at the place of high-level outcomes in the major to which students need only be introduced at the undergraduate level.

The committee observed also that when faculty make the case for how our courses contribute to student learning, as part of outcomes discussions, faculty may experience challenges answering that question for multiple courses, and not only for their advanced courses. The point of SOA is not to “bump off” some courses or protect other courses within the department but to promote discussions that enhance the quality of students’ learning. These discussions can result in changes in what we teach and how we teach but these discussions, in themselves, do not place at particular risk any sub-category of courses (e.g., advanced courses and seminars). We need to remain open to discussion in order to explore with care how our courses contribute to student learning and changes we might make that would enhance the capacity of our courses to do so.