

Minutes: CSOA meeting, March 23, 2005

Attending: Schmitz, Nelson, Baughman, Chatham-Carpenter, Reineke
Regrets: Planells, Colburn, Berghammer

1. SOA Template

The Committee reviewed the revised draft of the SOA template for reporting annually to the dean on departmental SOA process. "B" and "C" (Findings and Follow-up) had been one item; they are now two. Other minor changes were noted. The final draft is a separate attachment.

Committee members expressed a desire to work with heads next year on introducing an enhanced SOA process to their departments. Committee members are concerned that SOA not be presented to colleagues in ways that "dump" it on particular professors. Rather they want to strategize so that broad based ownership is encouraged. They also hope for explicit and consistent support from the heads. It was observed that strategies will vary among departments: some departments are likely to pursue SOA through curriculum committees; others through formal SOA committees; and others through ad hoc committees of interested faculty.

The committee decided that each member will meet with his/her dept head before the next meeting. Each will discuss in a very preliminary way their head's perceptions of where their department stands in relation to SOA. What are faculty perceptions, knowledge of SOA, and attitudes? Where does the SOA process stand and what would be reasonable goals for next year? Who will do what in the SOA process next year? This conversation *will be an informal and very preliminary sounding* of each department so that at our April and May SOA Committee meetings we can brainstorm more knowledgeable about SOA plans for each department for next year.

2. NCA Update

Reineke reported that Bev Kopper had presented a PowerPoint show produced by the NCA on SOA at the last meeting of the ad hoc university committee on SOA. Bev will be happy to present that to our committee and/or other interested faculty in CHFA. The slide show is an overview of the new outcomes-based NCA criteria for accreditation. The committee expressed interest in Bev's report. Reineke will plan to schedule it for next year. Reineke reported that the Provost's office is paying for members of that ad hoc committee to attend the NCA meeting in April. Reineke will bring back information on SOA from that meeting to share with the committee.

Reineke reported that Bev had mentioned at the ad hoc meeting that the LAC Committee has created a preliminary set of LAC goals and posted them on their web site. Our CHFA committee had discussed the need for such a set at our last meeting and none of us knew that the LAC Committee had created a set and posted them. Bev says that the LAC Committee is open to revisions and additions. The existence of these goals means that our committee won't need to generate a set (as we had discussed doing at our last meeting). Instead, we can go immediately to using a future meeting to review these goals and discuss how each department in CHFA can claim them as LAC skills for their majors (on the model of Alverno discussed at the February meeting). Baughman noted that it would be good to get some LAC measures of student abilities in the LAC core courses so that we can assess the improvement of skills at the major levels. For example, LAC skills in critical writing from the LAC core courses need to be assessed and data shared so that when seniors in their majors use critical writing skills we can make judgments about the degree to which students are succeeding with an LAC outcome of critical writing skills at the senior level.

3. CHFA SOA Website

Reineke has been approved for a slot on the FrontPage server and will begin developing an SOA resource web site for the college this summer. Items to be included: outstanding SOA programs at other universities; rubric maker sites (for charting SOA in courses, programs, etc.), FAQ with links to print and electronic resources, etc.

4. Allen – Chapter 1

The committee spent most of the meeting engaging in a free-ranging discussion of Chapter 1 in Allen. Everyone contributed and the note taker regrets that in her efforts to keep track of the ideas she was unable to record for posterity the authors of the many helpful insights recorded below. Please assign your own gold stars as you read. Also, if your idea is missing and you remember what you said, please tell the note taker. She probably was so interested in it that she totally forgot to write it down!

- Academic freedom as an issue was discussed. Allen mentions this and Reineke brought an excerpt on the same subject from Barbara Walvoord's book and distributed it to the committee. At the ad hoc university meeting that Reineke attended, one college representative reported that this is becoming a huge issue – faculty do not want SOA exam questions embedded in their course exams and are citing academic freedom in refusing to cooperate. The SOA representative indicated that the faculty are afraid that their teaching will be evaluated negatively if their students score poorly (the representative added that they should be evaluated negatively because there are some instructors of some sections who are doing a poor job of teaching). Multiple responses from members of the committee to this "case study" ensued:

- 1) Assessment shouldn't be linked with evaluation of faculty – the PAC and post-tenure teaching reviews are mechanisms for evaluation.
 - 2) Evaluation should be kept totally separate from SOA and faculty should know that data will be collected, aggregated, and deleted of specific faculty and student names before the data is brought forward for evaluation by the faculty. The data collectors will need to preserve anonymity of faculty as they compile the data.
 - 3) It sounds like some faculty have concerns about colleagues' teaching and appear willing to highjack SOA in order to act on those concerns.
 - 4) It is too bad that SOA is being introduced this way – it is going to be very hard for that college to recover the trust of its faculty.
 - 5) This is unlikely to happen in CHFA because we are taking a very different approach to SOA.
- Selecting program objectives was discussed. Reflections from members of the committee included:
- If a given program objective is coming up lean (students apparently are not achieving outcomes), we may need to question whether there is really a curricular commitment to the objective. We will need to look to see where in the program we are supposedly offering students an opportunity to develop skills to meet this outcome.
 - We can gather objectives for our programs initially by sharing ideas among the faculty.
 - Objectives that are course specific may be too specific for SOA. While it is possible that students could obtain a program outcome through a single introduction to it in one course, we probably should look first for outcomes in which students attain competencies in multiple courses. We can recall the grid from Allen that shows these competencies being developed in at least three courses (introduced, practiced, and demonstrated).
 - Aiming for future outcomes at first and tracking them across multiple courses is probably a good idea.
- Continuous quality improvement as a common subject in SOA publications was discussed. Schmitz pointed out that in Music, recitals are delayed until students are ready for a successful performance. So if SOA were based on recital failures, SOA wouldn't be very insightful. In thinking about whether there were commonalities for majors in CHFA that aren't performance based, it was mentioned that students could publish essays, poetry, etc. which would be public like a "recital." SOA could be developed around this. It was mentioned that the outstanding papers in Economics are published each year. Rather than meet the unachievable goal of having all students demonstrate "giftedness" in performance (recital, poetry, publication worthy articles, or whatever), SOA should look for ways to bring all students to a certain level and to bring more of them every year to that level.

- It was mentioned that faculty attitudes toward SOA may be impacted by the lack of rewards/punishments associated with it. What could be motivators for faculty to make SOA successful? Rewarding individuals might be counterproductive if that led most of the faculty in a department to think that SOA was always going to be done by someone else. The “grading” of the first generation of SOA plans was mentioned as a disincentive for departmental investment. Reineke mentioned that she had seen on some web sites that universities recognize a department each year for outstanding SOA processes and reward the department in some way.

5. Plans for next meeting

The committee decided that for its final two meetings of the year, it will continue to work through Allen, adding one more chapter for next time. The goal will be to always stay at least one chapter ahead of our departments in terms of our SOA knowledge. We also want to focus this spring on learning enough from the beginning chapters of Allen to forecast where we can realistically move next year. We need to think ahead of obstacles we may encounter, concerns that we will need to address, etc. if we are to get colleagues’ buy-in on the SOA process next year.

We decided our “homework” would be:

- 1) Read Chapter Two in Allen and come prepared to discuss it.
- 2) Prior to the next meeting, meet with our department heads to get their sense of faculty questions and concerns that will need to be addressed early in the fall if each department is to move forward next year with SOA work in each.
- 3) Write down any concerns/questions generated in conversation with our heads or which colleagues may have raised with us to bring to the April 18 meeting. To what extent does Allen in Chapter 1 or in Chapter 2 offer answers to these questions? Which questions need more research and collective thinking?