

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Deans

FROM: Jim Coffman

RE: 1) Academic Assessment  
2) Academic Assessment and Program Review

DATE: July 1, 2003

In late Fall 2002, Al Cochran and I appointed a campus Task Force group (Student Learning: Outcomes, Assessment, Improvement, and Reporting) to look at moving forward student assessment on campus. Attached are copies of a memorandum from the Chair, Cia Verschelden, as well as copies of the Task Force groups reports.

The intent of this memorandum is to implement the recommendations of the Task Force group. These will be detailed below:

### **Student Learning Outcomes:**

Please provide to me a list of Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) for each undergraduate and graduate degree program in your college. I have asked the Office of Assessment and Program Review to prepare a list of those academic programs in your college that will require learning outcomes. While the initial focus will be on program majors, you should start work on similar list of outcomes for minors, second majors, certificates, etc. To facilitate the process, a cover sheet template is provided and should accompany each set of learning outcomes. Faculty involvement in this process is essential and necessary. To that end, please indicate on the cover sheet the faculty member who is the contact for the SLO list and a date when faculty members in the department reviewed and endorsed the SLOs. There is also a place on the sheet for the dean to sign, and in the case of a graduate degree program, for the dean of the Graduate School to sign. Ron Downey, Director of Assessment and Program Review, and Cia Verschelden, leader of the Early Adopters work group, are available for consulting purposes on the development of SLOs.

**These lists are due by December 1, 2003.** They are a critical part of the upcoming focused visit from NCA. I understand that the lists you will provide may be preliminary documents that are subject to review and revision by the faculty. If so, please make note of that on the cover sheet and state the expected date of completion. In either case, the SLOs need to be reviewed at least every five years and re-approved by the responsible faculty members.

While no requirements will be set, it should be noted that the Task Force group recommends that SLOs be developed for all classes, including those for majors, UGE courses, as well as general service courses. You should also note that SLOs need to be consistent with, and

tied to the university-wide student learning outcomes. A revised set of SLOs has been forwarded to Faculty Senate for discussion, beginning Fall 2003 (a draft is attached for your review).

### **Annual Progress Reports on Program Assessment:**

The purpose of academic assessment is to improve student learning. Assessment is often envisioned as a reoccurring cycle: 1) identification of SLOs; 2) development of instructional materials (classes and teaching methods); 3) development of assessment methods; 4) conducting assessments; 5) using assessment to identify needed improvements; 6) revision of SLOs and instructional methods; and 7) repeating the cycle. Our assessment efforts will be an on-going process and not just a one-time event. To that end, we will conduct annual reviews of our efforts, and as recommended by the Task Force group, I am asking for an annual progress report from each college. The college reports will be due the first business day in December each year, starting in 2004. There is no set format for the college reports, but they should not exceed five pages. They should be based on departmental reports provided to you (you determine the format and length), which are due on the first business day in November each year, starting in 2004.

### **Program Review Reports:**

Starting in CY 2004, those academic programs that are part of the Board of Regents (BOR) program review process will provide information on their assessment efforts (recall this is a seven-year review cycle). Assessment information, including improvement efforts, will be included in each department's ten-page report to the dean, in the two-page summaries, and special two-page assessment reports, as specified below:

A two-page Program Review Report will be developed for each degree program (beginning with units with Program Review Reports due in December 2004) and at each level (Associates, BA/BS, MA/MS, and Ph.D./Ed.D.) of the degree program and appended to the Program Review documents. Those graduate degrees with an integrated master's and doctoral program (who admit all students into a Ph.D. program) may provide one assessment report for both.

Each two-page Program Review Report should contain the following sections:

- ✓ A brief description of the assessment efforts of the degree program. The description should include references to applicable reports with web sites provided. The report should focus on learning-based assessment efforts.
- ✓ A summary of those areas identified in the assessment programs as needing improvement. References to background reports should be provided.
- ✓ A brief description of the changes made to address those areas identified above as needing improvement.
- ✓ A list of faculty responsible for the assessment and improvement efforts for this degree.

## **Support from Assessment and Program Review and the Early Adopters Working Group**

For many of us, this process will be a new experience, but the Office of Assessment and Program Review (APR) and the Early Adopters (EA) working group will be available for assistance. APR will provide technical help in the development of assessment methods and approaches, as well as resource materials. APR will be coordinating the various reports due to the Provost Office. The EA working group (primarily faculty members), headed by Cia Verschelden, will provide assistance in developing an on-line Assessment Manual for departments and identifying the basic elements of an assessment of student learning plan. EA will also work with departments and individuals to develop methods to improve degree programs based on the results of the assessment efforts.

This will be a labor-intensive process, headed up by the faculty members in each academic degree area. However, it will be time well spent, with the goal of leading us to overall institutional improvement. The educational services we provide to our undergraduate and graduate students are things we do each time we teach a course or alter our curricula. The major changes we anticipate with this new initiative are that the process will be fully specified, organized, focused on student learning, and documented. As we move forward over the next several years in implementing a comprehensive academic assessment process, it is likely that periodic honing of the procedures and processes will be needed. We need to be, and remain, flexible and responsive.

Of equal importance are the student services we provide, such as career counseling, student information, and special services, which are critical components of students' opportunities for success. It is my understanding that a parallel process of assessment activities and reporting will be conducted in the student services area.

I will be placing this topic on the Dean's Council agenda as soon as possible. A final letter will be prepared after this has been discussed by, and with, all of you. Please contact me or Ron Downey if you have questions.

Enclosures

CC: VP Institutional Advancement, Ron Downey, Al Cochran, Cia Verschelden, and Patricia Marsh