Assurance of Learning Committee Fall Convocation Report  
August 5, 2009

Members: Jim Bishop; Kathy Brook (ex-officio); Liz Ellis; Randy McFerrin; Greg Roth (chair); Jim Shannon; and Kelly Tian.

Executive Summary:

The Assurance of Learning (AoL) Committee met five times during the 2008-2009 academic year. In the first few meetings the AoL Committee continued to struggle with the detailed problems of implementing assessment procedures by functional areas (Accounting; Business Law; Economics; E-stat; Finance; IS; Management; and Marketing). However, after the visit from our assessment consultant, Liz Fletcher, and the appointment of an assessment coordinator, Sherry Mills, the focus of the AoL Committee changed substantially. In the last several meetings the AoL Committee met with Sherry to discuss and begin new methods of assessment, new methods of results reporting, and new divisions of assessment labor. The responsibilities of the AoL Committee have fundamentally changed under this new approach. Briefly stated, the Graduate and Undergraduate Curriculum Committees now will be responsible for establishing learning goals; establishing the components for each goal; and establishing performance targets for each goal component. The AoL Committee will be responsible for designing assessment instruments (tools); directing the use of the instruments; gathering data; and reporting assessment results to the Graduate and Undergraduate Curriculum Committees. Going forward, the Graduate and Undergraduate Committee will have the authority to decide in which courses goal assessment takes place. There is no longer a presumption that each functional area will be responsible for assessing one goal. The Graduate and Undergraduate Curriculum Committees also has the authority to make changes in course curriculum in response to assessment results.

Highlights of the five AoL meetings minutes from the 2008-2009 academic year follow:

At the November 12 meeting those attending were: Kathy Brook; Liz Ellis; Randy McFerrin; Greg Roth; Jim Shannon; and Kelly Tian.

Kathy Brook distributed a list of our learning goals along with her attempt to deduce learning objectives from the rubrics used in assessment. It was agreed that the functional area representatives will confirm that those learning objectives are correct or will provide alternative learning objectives.

Greg Roth provided copies of the AoL report format for the committee members and reminded all members that the components of the report must be submitted to the committee chair by the functional area representatives by July 15 each year. Greg also provided an update concerning the AoL documentation which should be submitted to Kathy each year for inclusion in the AoL notebook she maintains.
Randy McFerrin, representing the Economics functional area, presented a proposal to change the assessment instrument and rubric being used to assess students’ abilities to develop an analytical and systematic approach to solving problems (goal 5.1). A motion to approve the change passed unanimously with a request that an assessment report be submitted to the committee in spring 2009.

Greg Roth, representing the Finance functional area, also submitted a request to change its assessment instrument which is designed to measure students’ ability to apply financial decision-making in solving problems (goal 5.4). A motion to approve the change in the Finance area’s assessment instrument passed unanimously.

Liz Ellis discussed proposed changes from the BLAW faculty in the assignment used to assess students’ ability to recognize legal problems (goal 6.1). The motion to approve the BLAW area’s proposed changes passed unanimously.

At the March 18 meeting those attending were: Jim Bishop; Kathy Brook, Liz Ellis; Randy McFerrin; Sherry Mills (assessment coordinator); Greg Roth; Jim Shannon; and Kelly Tian.

Greg brought to the attention of the Committee the fact that his term on the Committee ends in May and that a new chair will need to be selected. Normally, the Committee members and the chair are selected at the beginning of the fall semester. In subsequent discussion, Kathy agreed to discuss this issue with the CEC with the possibility of following up with the Budget, Bylaws and Policy Review Committee to modify the by-laws to allow for selections to be made in the late spring. (This issue has also been raised in the P&T Committee.)

An email recently sent by the Accounting chair to the AoL Committee members led to a discussion of the process that has been followed by the AoL Committee in collecting assessment reports from the faculty in the functional areas. This process is currently undergoing multiple changes with a restructuring of the duties performed by the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee, The AoL Committee, and the newly appointed Assessment Coordinator.

The Business Law report due on February 15 was delayed until today because of a problem in eliminating from the data set students who had withdrawn from the course. The BLAW issue led to discussion of the problem of non-response by students. That is, how should we record the situation where students fail to submit an assignment that is being assessed? Kathy and Sherry will see what they can find out on this subject. This could be an issue if it significantly distorts the sample.

Liz Ellis reminded the group that Liz Fletcher had recommended including the sample and population sizes in the assessment reports. It was also suggested that the report include a question asking that any changes made to the assessment assignment, rubric, etc. be discussed. A motion to this effect was approved.
Sherry attended the meeting as the assessment coordinator for the college and distributed a proposal for allocating assessment responsibilities among the AoL, Graduate and Undergraduate Committees and reviewed the proposal with the Committee. The proposal seems to be consistent with the college by-laws. A motion to accept the allocation of responsibilities listed in Sherry’s document was approved unanimously. Sherry will be reviewing the document with the other Committees in the near future.

Sherry also distributed to the Committee a memo describing action items for AoL. One item was a request for existing curriculum maps, rubrics, assessment results, etc. to be provided to the Undergraduate Committee Chair and to Sherry. Kathy noted that she will send out today a link to the assessment web page. A number of materials have been assembled there for the assessment of the BBA, with more to follow. Included are the fall convocation reports from 2005 through 2008.

Sherry also asked that the AoL Committee respond to the Undergraduate Committee about the issues raised in the Undergraduate Committee’s report to the spring 2009 convocation.

To assist the Committee in developing rubrics, Sherry provided an example of goals, objectives, components, performance criteria, and a rubric from the Bachelor of Accountancy program.

At the March 31 meeting those attending were: Kathy Brook; Randy McFerrin; Sherry Mills (assessment coordinator); Greg Roth; Jim Shannon; and Kelly Tian.

Greg Roth noted that some of the discussion at the earlier meeting had focused on the old structure of the AoL Committee and that the issues may have been made irrelevant by the anticipated changes which call for the AoL Committee to report to the Undergraduate Committee. The changes in structure mean that it may not be worth pursuing issues about the participation of each functional area in the assessment process.

Sherry Mills, as assessment coordinator, presented an example of the sort of table she is asking the Undergraduate Committee to set up for each goal. The tables include objectives, components and performance criteria. The writing and integration goals are the items that Sherry argues need attention from the Undergraduate Committee as soon as possible. Sherry states that the Undergraduate Committee will come up with the performance criteria for each goal and the AoL Committee will set up the rubric and set the performance standard.

Randy McFerrin noted that previously it was expected that the analysis/scoring of the assessment data would be completed by the same department that collected the data. We are now looking at the possibility of separating the data collection and data analysis, at least in some circumstances.
There was brief discussion of the need to remove non-business majors from the analysis (something the Advising Center has been assisting with) and the acceptability of sampling of student work.

At the April 7 meeting those in attendance were: Kathy Brook; Liz Ellis; Randy McFerrin; Sherry Mills (assessment coordinator); Greg Roth; Jim Shannon; and Kelly Tian.

Sherry Mills introduced the information technology assessment proposal providing the goal, objectives, components, and performance criteria that have been approved by the Undergraduate Committee. Jim Shannon then described the redesigned assessment mechanism that was needed. Jim indicated that the weighting of the assignment in the course grade is large enough to affect the student’s letter grade in the course. This assessment procedure will be tested in the summer in BCIS 338.

There was a discussion of the need for consistency in weighting of assessment assignments (across instructors) in order to address a program goal. However, it was agreed that we need to solve bigger issues first and come back to this at a later date.

Sherry indicated that this assessment tool provides an example of how the AoL Committee will be working with faculty in the future to develop rubrics and assignments.

A second component of assessment in BCIS 338 is the writing assignment which will be graded for the course as well as being an assessment instrument. A motion to approve the assessment methodology for the IT and writing goals (goal 1 and 4) was approved unanimously.

At the April 14 meeting those in attendance were: Jim Bishop; Kathy Brook; Liz Ellis; Greg Roth; Randy McFerrin; Sherry Mills (assessment coordinator); Jim Shannon; and Kelly Tian.

Assessment plans: Sherry Mills distributed copies of the MBA Assessment Plan dated April 2009. Sherry indicated that we need a similar assessment plan for the BBA.

Performance goals: The target levels of performance for each goal will be established by the Undergraduate and Graduate Committees.

Data collection: In response to a question about the amount of data to be retained, Kathy indicated that the AACSB Assessment Resource Center (online) calls for keeping samples of students’ work reflecting varying levels of performance. She has some samples and will place them on the password-protected assessment page on the web as time permits.

Burden sharing: The sharing of the burden of assessment across departments was briefly discussed and may be a topic of future discussion.
Assessment of writing: Liz Ellis reported on a meeting she had last week with Patti Wojahn from the English Department. The English Department might be interested in assisting us with assessment of writing in our own courses and might also provide some of their GA’s to assist with teaching writing in business courses.

Assessment of BBA Goal 6 (legal issues): Liz Ellis distributed a hand-out concerning the assessment being conducted in BLAW 316. With respect to this goal, the committee had previously discussed the problem of students who do not complete assignments. It was agreed that students who withdraw from the course should not be counted in the population; at this time we will not try to address the issue of students who do not complete assignments but remain enrolled in the class.