

## COUNCIL ON ACADEMIC ASSESSMENT (CAA)

MINUTES, NOVEMBER 7, 2005

LC-31J; 1:30 – 3:00 PM

Maria Brown, Marjorie Pryse, Sue Faerman, Bill Lanford, Sean Walmsley, Malcolm Sherman, Kristina Bendikas, Olimpia Pelosi, Joette Stefl-Mabry, Barbara Wilkinson

Sherman announced that the agenda for the next Executive Committee meeting (at 3:30 today) will include our plan to expand departmental reviews to include minors, courses taken as electives, etc. The issue for the Executive Committee will presumably be whether we have the authority to implement this kind of policy change or whether Senate approval is required.

Brown asked what happens with our reports. Sherman responded that they are sent to the appropriate deans and to the office of the academic VP, and are available to faculty. Most requests for our reports will probably come from departments undergoing review who wish to gain a sense of what should be included in their self evaluations.

Sherman asked the council to select department self-study documents and external reviewer reports for the qualitative and quantitative committees to review. It was decided that the quantitative group will first review Art and Art History, and that the qualitative group will first review Music. Next the quantitative group will review French, and the qualitative group will review Women's Studies (hopefully by the end of the current semester).

Under old business the CAA discussed the revised Chemistry report. Bendikas called our attention to the deleted sentence on the second page, which stated that the Chemistry self-study "might even serve as a model for future reviews of similar departments." Does the Council categorize departmental reviews by quality? Would such models be useful for departments? Wilkinson responded that most frequently, departments request self-study documents from similarly structured departments. Sherman suggested that the council consider including a comment in the Chemistry report that it was a well done review. It was suggested that in first sentence of the second paragraph, the sentence be revised to say, "First, the Assessment Council felt that the Department of Chemistry prepared a clear and well written self-study document that was generally both complete and frank. Brown moved to adopt the Chemistry report with the changes. Lanford seconded. The Council voted and the motion was passed.

Walmsley asked whether this report is a good model of what is to be reported on self-studies in general. Sherman responded that the council reports compliance with the guidelines. Our reports would tend to focus on whether the report is complete, rather than with substantive comments. Brown added that the groups reviewing self-study documents check for missing pieces. Walmsley asked whether we essentially check whether departments complied with procedures. Lanford added that it would be risky to comment on suggestions made by the external reviewers. For example, one of the

suggestions in the Chemistry external reviewer report was to hire a “Chemistry Educator” but our report did not support or reject this. Faerman added that the purpose is to look at the assessment process, which allows the departments to get the feedback they need. The guiding question is, “has a department’s assessment process been set up to get the information it needs?” Lanford noted that one self study reviewed last year reported the number of FTEs, but provided little information on what majors did. This would fail to give a complete picture. It was noted that, to date, we have not seen many strong assessment plans. The council may also make suggestions to strengthen the assessment plan. Sherman explained that the Chemistry department included use of the American Chemical Society exam to meet the assessment plan guidelines, but did not address teaching. The use of focus groups was suggested to address this gap. Wilkinson said that the assessment office was offering to facilitate focus groups for all departments going through program review and that departmental responses have been positive. .

The council then discussed preparations for reviewing department self-study documents and external reviewer reports. Brown suggested using the template of guidelines that was developed last year. Wilkinson will send out an electronic copy.

Faerman announced the President’s Assessment Seminar on November 15<sup>th</sup>, and invited the council members to attend. Wilkinson will send out seminar invitations to the council. The council may also wish to plan something with the Deans to communicate our role in the program review process, particularly to reinforce assessment on a regular cycle. Sherman suggested that next semester may be a good time to begin these plans.

The next meeting was scheduled for Monday, December 5<sup>th</sup>, 1:30-3:00.

Respectfully submitted by Barbara Wilkinson