

Assessment Steering Committee
September 15, 2009
Meeting Notes

Present: Lisa Christenson, Ann Henderson, Sue Layden, Susan Walzer, Mimi Hellman, Mike Profita, Beau Breslin, Jim Chansky, Sarah Goodwin, Denise Smith, Claire Solomon, Julia Dauer

1. The meeting opened with Sarah's apology for not arranging to have Winston Grady-Willis, one of our two new members, added to our email list. [Winston's appointment actually became office on 9.16.09 when CEPP approved the switch with Michael Ennis-McMillan.] We then welcomed Mimi Hellman to our midst and let her know that we hope to begin meetings with an update from CEPP so as to keep the lines of communication strong.
2. Sarah gave a 30-second update on the summer assessment activities, notably work done by Lisa Christenson and Winston following up on the May workshop on Goal II learning. We will be calling a meeting soon of all those who participated in order to complete that first overview of the work to be done aligning the CD/NW requirement with our expectations for student learning as expressed in Goal II of the *Strategic Plan* and our Goals for Student Learning and Development. Follow-up on the workshop with Barbara Walvoord will include more work with chairs; in addition, Lisa and Sarah will consult with interdisciplinary program directors this year on their assessment work.
3. In addition, the year ahead:
 - Bring the Goals for Student Learning and Development to the faculty for endorsement;
 - Beau is overseeing a significant assessment project in the FYE;
 - Travel?
 - i. Sarah asked members of the committee to consider going to the AACU annual conference on general education and assessment in Seattle, Feb. 18-20; this could be a valuable conference and we should definitely send one or two people
 - ii. Middle States' annual conference is in Philadelphia, Dec. 9-11, in case any of you are interested in learning more about MSCHE culture.
 - iii. Sarah also mentioned a conference on assessment in Indianapolis that we might want to send someone to [<http://www.planning.iupui.edu/institute>]; it takes place October 26-27 and includes presentations by several sensible leaders in the field, including Thomas Angelo, Trudy Banta, and George Kuh]
 - Claire reported on the robust activities of the students' Academic Affairs committee, including designing a Crash Course on Practical Economics and planning a faculty panel on what faculty learned in college (and what they wish they'd learned)—tentatively.
4. Further discussion focused on the pressing question of how to frame the Goals as we bring them to the faculty for a vote of endorsement. We agreed that the reasons for establishing the Goals are many and overdetermined, principally 1) Middle States requires us to state our goals for student learning at all levels (courses, departments, all-college); 2) the administration has asked us to meet this requirement; 3) it makes sense for us to articulate, collectively, what we want our students to learn over their four years, both for ourselves and in order to communicate these goals to the community as a whole and other constituencies; 4) these Goals have been derived from existing documents, including the *Strategic Plan* which was approved by the faculty and others that have

emerged from faculty conversations; 5) we held a faculty forum on these goals last spring that resulted in significant changes, and brought this version of the goals to the faculty at the May meeting; now is the time to move ahead with a motion to endorse, further discussion, possible amendments, and ultimately a vote.

The Committee discussed how to prioritize these different aspects of the rationale when we present the motion to the faculty. We agreed that we need to think this through carefully, in consultation with CEPP. We also agreed that we need to ensure that as many faculty as possible have had the opportunity to raise questions and discuss the goals before the faculty meets to vote on them.

5. Sarah and Mimi noted that CEPP would be discussing the goals and the possibility of a motion at their meeting on Wednesday, 9/16.

Assessment Steering Committee
September 22, 2009
Meeting Notes

Present: Winston Grady-Willis, Lisa Christenson, Ann Henderson, Sue Layden, Susan Walzer, Mimi Hellman, Mike Profita, Beau Breslin, Jim Chansky, Sarah Goodwin, Denise Smith, Claire Solomon, Julia Dauer

1. Update from CEPP: Mimi and Claire brought us up to date on CEPP's deliberations about the goals. There is still some uncertainty about when to bring them to the faculty and how to frame that.
2. Claire and Julia updated us on the students' projects related to the practical learning goals. They noted that Career Services had conducted a successful workshop on the job search for seniors. Academic Council's plans for a workshop on basic personal finance and a faculty panel continue to develop.
3. Sarah updated us on Advancement's plans for Town Hall meetings with alumni, in which the draft Goals will be alluded to, as a work in progress; Sarah's and Erica's role will be to present the draft and solicit responses.
4. The rest of the meeting was devoted to discussing the strategies for the rationale for the goals, and when and how to present them to the faculty.

Discussion opened with the question: Can we distinguish between a vote to endorse the goals, and a vote to legislate them? We drew comparisons to the UWW vote: the administration had the right to make the decision; the faculty's vote to recommend closing UWW was an endorsement, not legislation. In this case, too, we are required to have goals, and CEPP is the appropriate body to develop them out of existing documents and practice. The goals are *descriptive*; they articulate things that we have said as a community for years but not all in one place and in this form. An endorsement would allow us to continue our inquiry into the evidence of what students are learning. [Would a failure to endorse present obstacles to that inquiry? What is Plan B if the faculty voted not to endorse?]

The discussion then shifted to the question: What if the faculty didn't vote? The logic would be: "Middle States requires goals, and the administration has asked us to produce them. CEPP has endorsed these. We invite you to participate in shaping the goals and we earnestly seek your input again before we finalize them."

It was noted that this ultimately is CEPP's decision. Is there so much at stake that we need the faculty's endorsement? Might we start with a discussion by the committee of the whole, rather than with a motion?

The question was raised whether we had in fact already made this decision at our meeting last spring. By the end of the meeting, we were near a consensus to ask CEPP not to bring a motion. Sarah asked to continue the discussion next meeting, under time pressure to adjourn.

**Assessment Steering Committee
September 29, 2009**

Meeting Notes

Present: Lisa Christenson, Ann Henderson, Sue Layden, Susan Walzer, Mimi Hellman, Winston Grady-Willis, Mike Profita, Beau Breslin, Sarah Goodwin, Denise Smith, Julia Dauer; guest from CEPP: Erica Bastress-Dukehart. Absent: Jim Chansky, Claire Solomon

1. We had a brief update from Julia on the students' projects, which are moving along.
2. In lieu of a brief update from CEPP, we had a full report from Erica and Mimi about CEPP's discussion of whether to seek the faculty's endorsement of the goals in a vote. CEPP reached a consensus that we should do that. CEPP raised the possibility of trying to schedule a joint meeting of the two committees; that seemed hard to do on short notice, and there was a sense that we should have a plan before the October faculty meeting. Subsequently, Erica, Sarah, Beau and Terry met on short notice to confer about the difficulty CEPP sees in bringing a motion that the ASC is reluctant to bring. It was agreed that this would not work, and that the ASC should return to this question with CEPP's views in mind.
3. Discussion followed. We brought up the primary point made by Terry in the small group—that the faculty should and does have primary ownership of the question of what our students should learn, and thus it is appropriate to seek an endorsement. It was pointed out that the full participation of the faculty in shaping the goals is the most crucial thing, and that seeking a vote will slow things down and may be complicated, but is worth doing. A consensus emerged that we do want to seek a vote.

We talked about possible timelines and scenarios; it seems that it would be best to try to hear as many voices as possible before the vote on the floor and to be prepared to entertain further changes to the Goals. In that context, we decided that we should plan for further discussion during October and then bring a motion in November if we seem ready.

We also talked about strategies for listening to as many responses as possible. These include:

- Holding two or more open meetings to solicit responses.
- Setting up an online forum for faculty to respond.
- Asking IPPC to consider the goals and, if possible, to endorse them before we bring them for a vote.
- Meeting with the students' Academic Council and, if it makes sense, seeking their endorsement.
- Meeting with as many departments as we can before the motion comes to a vote. (This means getting on agendas of our department meetings, if possible, and perhaps farming out to other departments as well. The departments represented on our committee are American Studies, SASW, Art History, English, Exercise Science, and Government. If CEPP agrees to do this too, we will also reach Dance, History and Geosciences.)
- Sarah is also meeting with Student Affairs staff, at the invitation of Rochelle Calhoun.

4. Erica agreed to work up a brief rationale, including some history of the Goals process to date, to deliver orally at Friday's faculty meeting, to see that hardcopies of the goals are available, and to announce our plans for listening to further responses and then bringing a motion in November.

Sarah reminded all that we do not meet next week because she is out of town.

**Assessment Steering Committee
October 13, 2009
Meeting Notes**

Present: Winston Grady-Willis, Lisa Christenson, Ann Henderson, Susan Walzer, Mimi Hellman, Mike Profita, Beau Breslin, Jim Chansky, Sarah Goodwin, Denise Smith, Claire Solomon, Julia Dauer; absent: Sue Layden; visitor: Erica Bastress-Dukeheart, CEPP

1. We talked briefly about process: who owns the Goals now? If we wish to make changes in response to suggestions made at the two open fora, should ASC or CEPP undertake that process? We agreed that since ASC reports to CEPP, CEPP now has jurisdiction, though ASC can recommend changes to CEPP.
2. With that in mind, we talked about the document "Notes on Open Discussion of Goals" (see below). Among the notes, several (#s 3 from 10/8 and 2, 3 and 4 from 10/9) relate to ways that we might frame the Goals in a rationale and/or as we present them. The others relate to suggested changes to the Goals themselves. Among the points we might make as we frame the goals are to address
 - How the Goals will be used, in what contexts and for what purposes
 - Why there are Goals here that are not delivered in the curriculum; how these are goals for the *students'* learning throughout their Skidmore experience, wherever that learning happens; how these are not a checklist for the students
 - Given that institutional scope, why it still makes sense for the faculty to endorse them
3. We then discussed at length the first recommended change, from Lary Optiz about the place of practical learning and skills in the document. We considered adding or rewriting bullets and at length decided to recommend adding a phrase to the preamble to the Goals. The first sentence would now read (addition in italics): "The goals that follow reflect *the unique characteristics and synergies of our B.A. and B.S. programs, as well as* certain emphases that are deeply engrained in Skidmore's history and culture: on creativity, on civic responsibility, and on interdisciplinary thinking."
4. We agreed that we still want to discuss two further possible changes:
 - Headline IV, "Transformation": change to "Integration"? Or perhaps "Intellectual Maturity"?
 - Second bullet under Transformation: change "Embrace intellectual humility"? Delete it, qualify it, add a phrase such as "and passion"?
5. Erica, Mimi and Claire agreed to take our first suggested change to CEPP and to report back next week.
6. Further discussion of the Goals will take place at IPPC on November 16 and at the students' Academic Council next week.

I. Notes on Open Discussions of Goals

NB: These are not minutes and should not be circulated, since they make no pretense of being accurate or complete; they are just notes to help guide us as we consider any changes and prepare for further discussions that may be more challenging. I've included names of people who spoke in case we want to check back with any of them. Since it was an open meeting, I trust that we don't need to observe strict

confidentiality, though I ask you not to make these rough notes public or draw on them in any public context.

10/8/09 New bodies present: Lary Opitz, Mary Ann Foley, Marla Melito, Paty Rubio (and ASC and CEPP members)

1. Lary Opitz argued that the Goals don't take heed that we are not just a liberal arts college but also have BS programs, in which there is the expectation that students will acquire skills. We talked about whether this feature of Skidmore's education appears adequately in the Goals. We noted that the Goals reflect learning that we expect of *all* students, so the fact that 1/3 of our majors are B.S. majors is not fully relevant; the larger question is, do we in fact expect skills and practical learning of all of our students? And if so, where might we articulate that more fully in the Goals? Two ideas emerged: to insert a phrase in the preamble, and to insert a bullet.
2. Lary also objected to the emphasis on humility to the exclusion of pride. As he noted, just as we expect our students to be humbled by the awareness of how much more they have to learn, we also expect them to seize their education with a certain gusto. Suggestion: insert "passion" into the humility bullet.
3. Mary Ann Foley asked about the larger implications of the Goals: are they descriptive or visionary? Do they have implications for the curriculum? These are questions that we need to be prepared to answer.
4. Paty Rubio asked about the fourth bullet, "Transformation." She noted that it doesn't seem to resemble the other three, qualitatively, and questioned its appropriateness.

10/9/09 New bodies present: Michael Arnush, Jennifer Delton, Tim Harper, Leslie Mechem, Mary Lynn, Dan Nathan, Ben Givan, Mark Huibregste, Grace Burton, Kyle Nichols, Guiseppe Faustini (and ASC and CEPP members)

1. Leslie Mechem asked about the practical competencies bullet (third under Values below); others expressed some unease with its placement in the document. When we mentioned that the previous day the suggestion had arisen to strengthen the emphasis on practical skills, we had some lively discussion about whether our intellectual core is eroding under an exaggerated emphasis on practical applications and extra-curricular activities.
2. Michael Arnush asked about the role of the faculty in this process. Are we being asked to endorse something we don't actually do? What is being expected of us? Two answers: 1) the Goals focus on what we want our students to learn, not what faculty do; 2) We do need to articulate the actual process, what the vote will look like.

3. Ben Givan voiced confusion about whether these goals will constitute a checklist; will students have to check off that they have learned these things before they graduate? What will that mean? Will faculty be held accountable for teaching them? Again, multiple answers came up. 1) No, it's not a checklist for students and has nothing to do with criteria for graduation. 2) The college will use the Goals as a basis for asking whether and where our students are learning these things. Much of this learning takes place outside the curriculum (generally, but not always, as well as inside it).
4. The question then from Jennifer Delton and Mary Lynn was: What's the end game? What will the goals mean? The answer, again: They will serve as the basis for our ongoing assessments, which will continue much as they have been done but within a more coherent framework. And yes, they are required for re-accreditation.

Assessment Steering Committee
October 20, 2009
Meeting Notes

Present: Winston Grady-Willis, Lisa Christenson, Ann Henderson, Susan Walzer, Mimi Hellman, Mike Profita, Beau Breslin, Jim Chansky, Sarah Goodwin, Denise Smith, Claire Solomon, Julia Dauer, Sue Layden

1. Report from CEPP: Mimi reported that CEPP acknowledged our suggested additional phrase for the preamble but did not take action on it. CEPP is unsure of the process from here, in particular whether we can or would want to bring a motion in November and follow that immediately with a committee of the whole, or whether we should have the faculty discussion, determine any further amendments we might want to make, and then bring the amended Goals and a motion to endorse them in December, with the vote in February.
2. Mimi also reported briefly on the Art History departmental discussion of the Goals; they did not like "Embrace intellectual humility" and noted that humility is a traditional Christian virtue associated with Mary.
3. Sarah reported on conversations about the Goals that took place on Oct. 16 with IPPC (they were quite interested, also asked about both humility and transformation, were generally approving, and took no action pending a future amended document; Justin Sipher noted the absence of any reference to the challenges of living in the digitally-rich 21st century, but was satisfied that the actual cognitive skills involved are in the Goals); Parents' Council on Oct. 17 (they were quite enthusiastic, and also asked about humility); Student Affairs staff today (see #4 below); and there was to be an additional conversation after this meeting with the Academic Council and other interested students.
4. The Student Affairs staff discussion was lively and generally supportive. They reported seeing their work represented in the goals and appeared to appreciate the concept of learning goals that encompass the co-curriculum as well as the curriculum. Over the course of the discussion it was clear that all of the staff who work directly with the students view themselves as contributing substantially to student learning at the college.

Student Affairs staff, too, questioned "humility," though they too seemed to find the explanation helpful in understanding it and ultimately didn't resist it significantly. Some questions were raised; the one suggestion that seemed to garner some support came from Rick Chrisman, the new interim chaplain, who noted the absence of any reference to contributing to or maintaining community, and this one seemed to resonate with a related suggestion from David Karp to strengthen the sense of obligations not only to oneself but to the community.

I agreed to bring this point back to ASC, and it didn't seem wrong-headed to me. It might be satisfied by adding a phrase to the 4th bullet under Values: "Apply learning to *build community* and find solutions for social, civic and scientific problems." Worth discussing?

5. We devoted the rest of the meeting to discussion of the humility bullet. Some points made/questions asked:
 - Are we addressing *character* with humility, in a way that we aren't in the rest of the Goals? Do we want to do that? Or does "*intellectual* humility" keep it aligned with intellectual rather than moral sensibility?
 - Are we introducing here connotations of Christianity? ("It is an unfortunate part of western history that certain organizations monopolize otherwise good words," one of us pointed out.) Does humility have similar value in other religions? (Is it also a secular value?)

- Might we replace it with *uncertainty*? Or add “passion and..”? Or confidence or competence? Or compress the humility bullet with the final bullet? Or place the humility bullet just before the final bullet?
- Humility leaves a lot of people uncomfortable or strikes a lot of them on first reading. Is that conceivably a strength? A place the Goals takes a risk or press a little against *idées reçues*?
- In social justice education, humility is associated with an awareness and critique of privilege; is that a dimension of what we want here?
- Do we need to make changes to the document in order to be responsive to the community discussions? Or is it enough to have considered suggestions at length, earnestly and from many angles?

After lively discussion we decided, through a show of hands, that we will leave the humility bullet as is until we have further discussion, particularly in a committee of the whole. We agreed that we would keep on reserve a number of alternative wordings that we discussed today. These are:

- 1) Embrace intellectual passion and humility.
- 2) Embrace intellectual humility and develop an enduring disposition to learn.
- 3) Embrace intellectual uncertainty.
- 4) Embrace intellectual humility and an enduring passion for learning.

NB: two of us also supported the idea, tentatively, of placing the humility bullet just before the final bullet on lifelong disposition to learn.

Assessment Steering Committee
October 27, 2009
Meeting Notes

Present: Sue Layden, Winston Grady-Willis, Lisa Christenson, Ann Henderson, Susan Walzer, Mimi Hellman, Mike Profita, Jim Chansky, Sarah Goodwin, Claire Solomon, Julia Dauer; absent: Denise Smith; Beau Breslin

1. Update from CEPP: CEPP asks to have from us any changes in the goals by today so that they can discuss them tomorrow and finalize the document that will be discussed by the faculty November 6 in a committee of the whole. They expect to bring a motion to endorse in December, if there appears to be a consensus building around the Goals as they are. [If not, all bets are off.]
2. Sarah reported on the lively discussions at Academic Council and three alumni Town Hall Meetings. Suggestions for changes from these discussions (and also Student Affairs' discussion last week) are as follows (circulated at today's meeting):

Notes on suggested changes to the Goals:

1. Potential insertions of "community":
 - "Develop practical competencies for managing personal, professional, **and community** life" (from DK) or
 - "Apply learning to *build community* and find solutions for social, civic and scientific problems" (from SG)
2. From students in the Academic Council discussion:
 - In the preamble: "we want our graduates to possess both knowledge and capacities that enable them to **initiate and** embrace change and apply their learning..."
 - Under Part III on values: "Interrogate one's own **and one's culture's** values in relation to those of others, across social and cultural differences"
 - Students also sought a place for "contributing to community" in the bullets
3. From alumni in the Town Meetings: Interest in seeing community there ("The most influential thing that happened there [at Skidmore] was that I took part in the community"—echoed by others).
3. We discussed changing "Transformation" in various ways. After much give and take, we decided to leave it as is. Some points made: "Integration" is a possible alternative, but there was not strong support for it; we like transformation as a concept because it is aspirational and links to the Strategic Plan; it refers not only to the final outcome of four years at Skidmore but also to many transformations that happen along the way. To address this last point, we decided to insert a phrase in the preamble ("from the beginning," before ""as a transformative experience").
4. We then discussed the place of community in the document and decided to adopt David Karp's recommended wording in the first bullet quoted above.
5. Finally, or maybe before this point, we also discussed the ideas from Academic Council recommended above and decided to insert "initiate and" before "embrace change." We also decided not to insert "one's own culture" in the values bullet: it oversimplifies the notion of culture, and it's already implicit in the bullet.

The final version with these changes tracked was sent to CEPP after today's meeting.

Assessment Steering Committee
November 10, 2009
Meeting Notes

Present: Winston Grady-Willis, Denise Smith, Beau Breslin, Lisa Christenson, Ann Henderson, Susan Walzer, Mimi Hellman, Mike Profita, Jim Chansky, Sarah Goodwin, Claire Solomon, Julia Dauer; absent: Sue Layden

1. Sarah reported briefly on communications about assessment and noted that this is somewhat new territory for the college. The faculty assessment coordinator works with the faculty but also, as it turns out, also speaks with outside constituencies, and needs to consult and develop a clearer sense of which information about our work can be made known in which contexts. In the context of the Town Hall Meetings project, this need has come into focus.
2. We talked about our responses to the faculty meeting discussion of the Goals document in the committee of the whole last Friday. The general sense was positive: no one questioned the need for such goals, and no one criticized what is *in* them; discussion focused on what the goals leave out: these included references to academic excellence; more on “hand and mind”; and reading, writing, and scholarship. Someone also asked whether the goals “set the bar too low,” and also whether they are sufficiently distinctive for the Skidmore context.
3. We then talked about the process from here. There was a consensus that we think “the Goals are still fine,” but that we acknowledge the need to respond in some way to the criticisms, and we see CEPP as determining that response. We agreed that we thought of, and might recommend, inserting the words “academic excellence” into the preamble’s second sentence, so that it would read: “As in the past, we aim to graduate students who strive for academic excellence, who can think deeply and creatively, communicate well and act effectively.” [SG would propose inserting a comma now after “communicate well,” for consistency.]

Beyond that, it was the committee’s sense that we would like to be helpful to CEPP as they steer the process.

4. We thought it might be helpful if we could answer more concretely how our actual assessment work will be affected by the Goals and how the ASC will move forward once/if they are endorsed. If we were to make a 5-year plan for assessment projects related to the Goals and to our students’ general learning, what would that look like?

Discussion followed. We noted that with the Goals, we will have three interconnected frameworks: the **Goals**, the **Strategic Plan** [which informed the subsequent Middle States Self-Study], and our general education **requirements** (Foundation [EW and QR], Breadth [Arts, Humanities, Natural Sciences, and Social Sciences], and Culture-Centered Inquiry).

Multiple projects are already underway related to Culture-Centered Inquiry, thanks to the work of Winston and CIGU. That work dovetails with projects underway by Lisa Christenson, Kristie Ford, and the OCSE. Ann noted that we have also just received the raw data from the CHAS climate survey. One next step for ASC could be to clarify the connections among these projects in relation to our Goals and the language used in our requirements.

Linking back to the Strategic Plan, we also noted that work is underway in the Science Planning Group to articulate goals for student learning in the natural sciences, and that

might guide us toward another set of projects related to another significant requirement and set of Goals in our document.

An additional project could be to align the forthcoming NSSE survey process and data analysis with the Goals for Student Learning and Development. And we also noted that the beta-test of the alumni learning survey is underway (and Sarah will send around the questions that are being posed this year). The plan is to revise and expand that, if possible in relation to the Goals, and reach all alumni over a 5-year cycle.

There was also a sense that we might be reactive as well as proactive: as assessment projects come up, the ASC could coordinate and link them with the Goals and our overall progress toward assessing them over time. Other potential projects mentioned were the Monmouth College project in which graduating seniors were asked to indicate where in their college careers they had learned the things that are in their college learning goals; and a project in which we might invite faculty who teach courses that fulfill a given requirement to gather and discuss their sense of the courses' and the requirements' goals.

Finally, there was some question about the function of the ASC in relation to CEPP in terms of deciding on future directions for assessment work.

The discussion was preliminary and inconclusive.

5. We talked briefly about whether it might make sense to change the ASC when/if the Goals are endorsed: whether we should be smaller and/or meet less frequently. We agreed that we should return to this question.

Assessment Steering Committee
November 17, 2009
Meeting Notes

Present: Sue Layden, Winston Grady-Willis, Beau Breslin, Lisa Christenson, Ann Henderson, Susan Walzer, Mimi Hellman, Jim Chansky, Sarah Goodwin, Claire Solomon, Julia Dauer;
absent: Denise Smith, Mike Profita

1. The Committee looked at the changes CEPP made last week in the Goals and nodded approval.
2. Claire reported on the Senate's discussion of the Goals, which was at first somewhat incomprehending, but they had an aha! moment and reached approval.
3. We looked at the LEAP project's Essential Learning Outcomes and noted that our Goals have come to resemble those more closely as they have evolved. Some discussion of whether this is a good thing or a bad thing. We noted that ours nevertheless have some distinctive features; our preamble makes that clear; and the AAC&U is actually trying to urge more colleges to bridge theory and practice, as we do and as our goals make clear.
4. We looked with some interest at learning goals as found on the web for three of our peers: Colby, Oberlin, and Gettysburg.
5. It came to our attention, as we considered our Goals document, that the Appendix listed on it probably should not be on the Goals document brought to the faculty for endorsement, if the Appendix is largely there to provide background information. We agreed to alert CEPP to this.
6. We will not meet next week because of the Thanksgiving break.

Assessment Steering Committee
March 10, 2010
Meeting Notes

Present: Lisa Christenson, Ann Henderson, Susan Walzer, Mimi Hellman, Mike Profita, Beau Breslin, Jim Chansky, Sarah Goodwin, Denise Smith, Claire Solomon, Sue Layden; absent: Winston Grady-Willis

1. Report from CEPP: Mimi reported that CEPP has been fully occupied with other matters and has not yet returned to the question of what to do next with regard to the Goals for Student Learning and Development and an assessment plan for general education.
2. Sarah reported on the AACU meeting on assessing general education outcomes that she attended in February with Erica Bastress-Dukehart and Mark Hofmann, with the goal of returning with a plan for next steps. The conference was very helpful in helping to identify not only what we might do, but also what we surely don't want to do (standardized tests, elaborate reporting schemas and systems). The tentative idea sketched by this group is to begin the process of aligning the Goals with the gen ed requirements by enlisting the faculty members of CEPP, Curriculum Committee, and the ASC to meet at the beginning of the fall semester with the faculty who teach courses that meet each of the four Breadth requirements (Arts, Humanities, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences). The purpose would be to revise the catalogue copy—and potentially also the guidelines—to articulate more fully to the students what the requirements mean, and to insert language from the Goals, where appropriate.

Discussion ensued. Some primary points:

- Is this our responsibility? Or does this initiative belong to CEPP? (Or perhaps the FYE or the Curriculum Committee?) After some discussion, we seemed to agree that it is CEPP's responsibility to undertake any revisions to the language describing the requirements.
- It may be the ASC's role to help in the process, and in particular to aim for new language that is also framed in the context of feasible assessment processes.
- We discussed the CD and NW requirements briefly as well and asked about how work on that language and those assessments will move forward in the context of the Breadth requirement considerations. We agreed to take this requirement up separately, since it is a separate requirement and also has been under some consideration already (and must be taken up again in the Middle States Periodic Review over the coming months, along with the Science Vision).

Since we decided that this next step falls in CEPP's purview, we went on to talk about our own next steps.

3. Sarah asked whether we should ask departments to map their own goals and curricula to the Goals for Student Learning and Development. The question arose: Why do this?
 - To keep the Goals alive in faculty's minds
 - More importantly, to begin to find out where in the curriculum each goal is being addressed
 - To begin to engage departments in questions regarding their students' learning beyond the major; or regarding non-majors' learning in their courses.
4. We talked about how we might solicit this information from departments without adding an onerous burden to chairs, who are already burdened (and some of whom are facing losing course releases). Numerous ideas were floated:
 - We could run an exercise at the Academic Staff retreat where chairs and directors would be asked to identify goals that are addressed in their programs.

- The exercise could also be organized by division, if not by department, or in some combination.
- Mike and Sue pointed out that an extended exercise like this, based on the Goals, is already underway in Student Affairs.
- We seemed to agree that it would be good to have a baseline inventory of where the Goals are being addressed across the college.
- Sue suggested we might frame such a short exercise with reports on data that we have from recent surveys (CHAS, NSSE).
- Jim pointed out that we would need to be clear with everyone up front that no one department is expected to deliver all of the goals.

By the end of the discussion, there seemed to be a consensus that Academic Affairs should, as Student Affairs is doing, conduct an inventory on the Goals, and that we need to gather information both from Chairs (perhaps a quick and dirty survey) and from faculty who deliver each of the Breadth requirements, as a start (also a quick and dirty survey, perhaps similar in structure to the Chairs').

Assessment Steering Committee
March 24, 2010
Meeting Notes

Present: Lisa Christenson, Susan Walzer, Mimi Hellman, Jim Chansky, Sarah Goodwin, Denise Smith, Claire Solomon, Winston Grady-Willis; absent: Ann Henderson, Mike Profita, Sue Layden, Beau Breslin

1. Report from CEPP: Mimi reported that CEPP has moved on from previous business to address “big picture” issues. We agreed that we should probably make a specific request to CEPP to also give us some guidance on what is expected from the ASC on the matter of assessing the Goals.
2. Update on Middle States: Sarah reported—just to keep this group in the know—that the process of putting together the periodic review report is getting underway, and our hope is to have a very rough first draft by mid-summer and to vet the draft in the community in the fall.
3. We spent the remainder of the meeting talking about the sample quick-and-dirty survey generated by Ann immediately following our last meeting as a way to think about how we will gather information about where our Goals are being addressed. Ann’s draft was directed at faculty who are delivering one or more courses that fulfill a Breadth requirement.

After much discussion, we came up with two models, two ways of thinking about an online survey and what we might hope to accomplish. Both, we agreed, should be readily adaptable so that we could use them with several different audiences to gather comparable information. The two are:

- 1) The existing survey, modified to include a Likert or similar scale rather than a Yes/No option, and with room for comments after each section. The advantage to this is that it is based directly on the existing language of the Goals, and that it is very short and easy to complete.
- 2) A survey that we began creating but didn’t quite finish, based on this one (also with a scale rather than Yes/No and with comments after each section), but with some of the elements within the bullets broken out as separate answers. For example, the second bullet, “Understand social and cultural diversity in national and global contexts,” would separate national and global, allowing a distinct answer for each. We struggled a bit with how much to separate out in the rest of the Goals, and fell short of time to finish. Sarah and Lisa agreed to create a draft based on what we did agree on and to circulate it for further comments.

The advantages to the longer survey are that it would give us more detailed information, and that respondents might be more inclined to take seriously a survey that allows for these distinctions than one that lumps sometimes widely disparate elements into one question.

Because we did not reach a clear consensus about the relative merits of the longer or shorter survey, we agreed that we would complete drafts of both and send them to CEPP for further discussion.