

Assessment Subcommittee of the IPPC

Meeting Notes

September 16, 2016

Present: Beau Breslin, Kim Crabbe, Corey Freeman-Galant, Sarah Goodwin, Henry Jaffe, Sue Laden, Kelly Sheppard, Mike Sposili, Auden Thomas. Absent: April Bernard, CEPP. [On leave: Lisa Christenson.]

1. Beau reported on the Middle States accreditation outcome: they decided in June to retain the two Recommendations submitted by the visiting team, but they were not made public and do not require a follow-up. The Recommendations urged us to develop more consistent and systematic processes for assessing student learning and institutional effectiveness.
2. Joe summarized the new Middle States structure and requirements that have been tentatively approved and are in the process of development and implementation. He will attend the Oct. 4 Town Hall meeting in Albany to learn more about them and ways we can provide input and feedback.
3. Beau described a draft proposal in the works for a better structure for assessing institutional effectiveness. It is based on the current Assessment Subcommittee, to be renamed the Subcommittee for Institutional Effectiveness, with proposed membership from each division of the college. A draft has been submitted to Joshua Woodfork.
4. Sarah circulated the existing Operating Code of the committee and asked: How can we better implement the charge that is given here? Discussion followed. Some observations made:
 - a. The new Dean of Student Affairs is forming an Assessment Committee within SA.
 - b. Advancement has a robust set of metrics for demonstrating success; it's less clear what is communicated to whom and how public the data are.
 - c. The Strategic Action Agenda, now considerably pared down, is often siloed by division; there is not consistent follow-up, nor are the goals always expressed in measurable terms, so there isn't a strong sense of outcomes assessment. And there could be better coordination and communication of the Agendas across divisions.
 - d. Even if the proposal for the new assessment structure is not approved, this committee needs members from Finance and Communications.
5. **Beau charged us with reading over the Operating Code and sending us suggestions: What changes in the code and/or our practice need to take place for us to have a robust culture of assessing institutional effectiveness?**
6. **We will aim to meet once a month to address this question and begin the process. In October, we will discuss our proposal to the IPPC.**

Assessment Subcommittee Minutes

October 27, 2016

Present: Beau Breslin, Corey Freeman-Galant, Sarah Goodwin, Henry Jaffe, Sue Laden, Mike Sposili, Auden Thomas. Absent: Kim Crabbe. [On leave: Lisa Christenson.]

1. Minutes from the meeting of September, 2016, were approved.
2. Sarah announced to general acclaim that Lisa Christenson is returning from her medical leave as of December.
3. Beau announced that the proposal for a new structure for assessing institutional effectiveness has not yet gotten a response from the President. Currently the two areas of the college that are missing from this committee are Finance & Administration and Communications; Beau said that he will ask Joshua Woodfork about adding representation from those two areas while we are waiting to consider the rest of the proposal.
4. We discussed the current Operating Code. Some points that were made:
 - a. Re: membership, we should only change it once.
 - b. We might do better to start from scratch and write a new Operating Code when we have movement on the new structure. What will the sequence be?
 - c. The new operating code will be a combination of the current one plus the changes ultimately approved from the proposal.
5. We addressed the question: What would it look like if we were fully performing our functions as described in the current Operating Code? Some answers:
 - a. Assessment in other divisions of the college would look a lot like departments and programs. We would have a plan; implement it; go through the assessment cycle; and report on the outcomes.
 - b. Lisa and Sarah read and synthesize the department and program assessments. Is there a way we could similarly aggregate assessments from outside of Academic Affairs for possible synergies? This could be difficult to put into practice, but also could be a valuable aspect of more integrated assessments. This group could do some of that work.
 - c. A good example is Admissions' review of the SATs, a project across divisions.
 - d. The Strategic Action Agenda is the vehicle currently for knowing each division's plans. Assessments could be tied to that agenda, presenting evidence of how well it has been accomplished.
 - e. Divisions do need the capacity to pivot if the agenda changes in response to events.

6. We discussed developing a template for offices and programs beyond academic departments. After some discussion of a couple of model templates, Beau charged Sarah with developing one that could be used throughout the college. Some points made:
 - a. Some divisions already track metrics and priorities on a regular basis, as much as weekly.
 - b. We need to be sure to ask: What did you do with your findings? How did you use them?

We agreed to continue this discussion.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah Goodwin

Assessment Subcommittee

Minutes 12/9/16

Present: Erica Bastress-Dukeheart (for CEPP), Beau Breslin, Lisa Christenson, Kim Crabbe, Sarah Goodwin, Henry Jaffe. Michelle Paquette-Deuel present for Special Programs. Absent: Corey Freeman-Galant, Sue Layden, Mike Sposili, Auden Thomas.

1. We welcomed Erica to the committee.
2. We approved the minutes for October 27, 2016, with edits (corrected spelling of Sue Layden's name; added Joe Stankovich to those present).
3. Update on the proposal for new institutional assessment structure: Beau talked about our need and plan to make progress. We can't be complacent; we did get through the Middle States process, but will need to develop a more systematic structure and approach to assessment, both to fulfill Middle States requirements and to ensure good practices in planning and decision-making throughout the college. We need a mechanism for conversations across divisions and reports to the Board of Trustees. Building a culture of assessment happens one step at a time; we need to keep taking steps. We should not rely on Middle States to drive this change. Sarah noted that the Gang of Five (Beau, Joshua Woodfork, Joe Stankovich, Lisa Christenson, and Sarah—so named during the recent Middle States re-accreditation process) will meet this month to make some progress.
4. We discussed the possibility of deciding on a form for each of the divisions and offices and running with it as a pilot in the spring. Perhaps we could ask for "Administrative and educational support outcomes/assessment" reports from each office and request that they let us know what works and doesn't work for them. Examples: HR assessing its staff training programs; Admissions: what next, after the great test-optional report? What team from which divisions/offices could assess for example the success of our shift to more international students?
5. Michelle raised the question: Could we call a meeting of directors in other divisions to brainstorm about assessment? Should Cabinet talk about this first?
6. Beau: how do we pivot if an institutional effectiveness leader is not immediately in the cards? How do we ensure that this work does get going across the college? (We know that much of the work is happening, but it needs also to be reported.) If the proposal is stalled, we need figure out what steps we can take in the meantime.
7. What should our next steps be? Offices throughout Academic Affairs and Student Affairs could be reporting on institutional effectiveness (instead of or in addition to student learning and development). Should we press on with that? Should we be communicating now with other divisions? How?
8. The next step is for Beau to talk with the President and get a sense of what our next steps should be, and will decide whether it is appropriate to circulate the existing IE proposal to the committee.

Committee members will hear from Jen Lewis shortly about possible meeting times in the spring.

Assessment Subcommittee Meeting Notes
April 10, 2017

Present: Lisa Christenson, Kim Crabbe, Sarah Goodwin, Henry Jaffe, Sue Layden, Ron Seyb, Kelly Sheppard, Mike Sposili, Joe Stankovich, Auden Thomas

Lisa led us in a Design Thinking exercise on assessing institutional effectiveness. It segued into a freewheeling discussion of the challenges of doing assessment and, in particular, of collaborating across different areas of the college.

The exercise was not meant to be conclusive or to lead to a specific agenda. The intent was to open up new possible ways to think about how the Assessment Subcommittee could make a substantive contribution to the college's effectiveness as a whole. Many points emerged, and the group played out some possibilities in imagined scenarios. We agreed to take up this topic in a concerted way at our next meeting in May.