

Sept. 1, 2011

To: Susan Kress, VPAA
From: Sarah Goodwin, Faculty Assessment Coordinator
Subject: Annual Report on Assessment

I. **ASC**

The Assessment Steering Committee met seven times this year. In the spring, it was next to impossible to find a meeting time, even though one had been blocked off for the semester. Several members resigned in the course of the spring. We were somewhat uncertain about our mission and agenda, as well as our authority to take any steps as a committee. As our primary accomplishments this year, we

- vetted and amended multiple drafts of the Periodic Review Report for Middle States;
- discussed and reviewed Lisa's inventory of high-impact practices at Skidmore;
- received updates on department and program assessments;
- received and discussed reports on NSSE data;
- launched the alumni Learning Census; reviewed the report before it became public and requested changes;
- discussed the initiative to define and assess our Learning Goal "Communicate effectively"; approved informally the May workshop to lay the groundwork for a senior week symposium on visual communication; also approved including a focus on awareness of audience/reader as part of effective communication. As part of this discussion, we reviewed all previous assessments of writing and their role in shaping the Writing in the Majors initiative;
- agreed to include the Learning Goal "Interact effectively....across social identities" as a dimension of effective communication in future assessments of writing and other forms of communication;
- discussed visual communication at some length, agreeing that we want to see an assessment that is useful above all else; will look to see a project that is modest and focused;
- revised the institutional Assessment Plan for inclusion in the PRR; more revision is needed, including a new structure for the Assessment Steering Committee.

II. **Periodic Review Report**

This was the major project this year for the assessment leadership team (the Faculty Assessment Coordinator, the Assessment Facilitator, and the Director of Institutional Research). Ann Henderson was immensely helpful during her final semester and had nearly all of the data and other files prepared before her departure. Joe Stankovitch stepped in seamlessly in the spring and helped wrap it up. This was our most data-

rich, evidence-based Middle States report ever. We know that we now need to continue mining that data and making use of the report in strategic planning.

- III. In May, we held a workshop on Visual Communication (notes attached below). This was to lay the foundation for a senior week symposium in May, 2012, defining and exploring visual communication in our curriculum, with an eye towards an assessment project in 2012-13.
- IV. Lisa continued the development and revision of the college's Assessment web page, culling outdated material and keeping the departmental materials, in particular, up to date.

V. Department and Program Assessments

A major goal of this year was to get more departments and programs engaged in doing and using assessments. Because of the PRR, we were not able to invest as much time in working with chairs and directors as we would have liked to, though Lisa did meet with numerous chairs about their ongoing work. We also ran a workshop lunch in December for chairs who were not moving forward with their plans; most of those have now submitted plans, and some have completed assessments.

Particularly outstanding reports were received from Anthropology, Asian Studies, Art History, Government, and International Affairs. Those departments deserve thanks and approbation. Their reports can be held up as examples for other departments.

A couple of chairs/directors continue to resist assessment; we will work with them further.

The following departments and programs submitted reports in spring or summer, 2011:

- American Studies
- Anthropology
- Art
- Art History
- Asian Studies
- Biology
- Computer Science
- Economics
- Education Studies (minimal report, more of a place holder)
- English
- Environmental Studies

Gender Studies
Government
History
International Affairs
Latin American Studies (report states that assessment hasn't happened)
Math
Neuroscience
Philosophy
Physics
Psychology

The following departments have not yet submitted reports but do have plans in place and have said they will submit a report:

Chemistry
Classics
Dance
Foreign Languages and Literature
Health & Exercise Science
Management & Business
Music
Social Work
Sociology

The following departments have neither a report nor a plan:

Geosciences
Theater

In addition, we have begun to work with MALS to develop direct assessment of student learning.

We plan to meet with each of the chairs/directors who has not yet submitted a report and work out a plan for them. We have responded to all of those who submitted a report (four responses are still in draft form and will go out in the next day or two; you will be cc'd). The assessments vary from non-existent to outstanding, with all points on the spectrum represented. We will provide a more detailed report on the state of program assessments once we have a concrete sense of where the remaining programs are. At that point we would like to develop together a fuller strategy for motivating and sustaining program-level assessment.

We continue to ask that every department or program undergoing an external review have completed and analyzed direct assessments of student learning before the review and as part of their self-study.

VI. **Agenda for 2012-13:** See attached.