

**Stephen F. Austin State University**  
**December 17, 2008**  
**Reaffirmation Steering Committee**  
**Minutes: Meeting #7**

**Members Attending:**

Dr. Ric Berry	Mr. Danny Gallant	Ms. Karyn Hall
Dr. Susan Jennings	Dr. Larry King	Ms. Roni Lias
Dr. James Standley	Mr. Steve Westbrook	
<b>Guest:</b> Ms. Nicole Nelson		

**Call to Order:** Meeting #7 of the Reaffirmation Steering Committee was called to order at 2:10 p.m. by Dr. James Standley. The presence of Dr. Jennings, new Steering Committee member, and Ms. Nelson, guest of the Committee, was noted and they were both welcomed to the meeting.

**Approval of Meeting #6 Minutes:** The minutes from Meeting #6 were reviewed and approved without revision.

**Old Business:** **Assignments from Meeting #6**

Course Syllabi - Dr. Standley stated that he had worked with Dr. Brunson and Dr. Rogers on the syllabi requirements.

**New Business:** **Reports**

SACS Annual Meeting in San Antonio, Dec. 6 - 9, 2008 - Dr. Standley commented that it was best to have this review of the annual meeting while it was still fresh in our minds, and he suggested that each member tell the highlights of the sessions they had attended.

Dr. Standley began first and discussed his Saturday workshop on portfolios which he thought was excellent, even though it had a single presenter, Dr. John Zubizarreta, for the entire day. Topics covered included reflective learning, documenting, Bloom's Taxonomy, and bulimic learning. Dr. Standley mentioned that he could recommend a book by Dr. Zubizarreta, should anyone be interested. Another workshop he attended covered the QEP and was presented by two women, one of whom he thought we might want to invite to SFA to discuss successful methodology.

Mr. Westbrook discussed workshop topics of Voluntary System of Accountability, (VSA), how to assess critical thinking, Collegiate Learning Assessment, (CLA), map and cap, validity of assessment, and use of National Survey of Student Engagement, (NSSE), for statewide program change. We will participate in the VSA. If we do this ourselves, we can keep the government out of it. When he asked if our instruments were valid, Ms. Hall stated that our College Portrait is ready and should be published in January. Dr. Standley added that this might be a good dissertation topic.

Ms. Hall presented handouts to meeting members for more detailed information and reference. Most helpful to her was a session Sunday afternoon on different pieces of the standards and how to produce compliance documents from those pieces. The session emphasized institutional effectiveness in 2.5, 3.5 and 3.5.1, as well as the importance of representing the correct pieces in the compliance document. Failure to do this properly was one of the most cited reasons for an institution to fall short in an audit. Ms. Hall also stated that the program content area doesn't need to be too long. All programs need to be listed in the narrative but should only address the abnormal or atypical ones. During the Texas state meeting, Ms. Hall received a substantive change guide which she was very glad to have because it tells what SACS wants and what they expect from us. The Higher Education Act wants confirmation of how we know who is taking tests in distance education classes, states we cannot deny transfer credit from an institution that is not accredited, and needs documentation of those students who drop out due to financial aid policy requirements. Dr. Standley stated that in the case of the BAAS degree, we need to accept transfer credit from private/parochial/technical schools not associated with an accreditation process. Ms. Hall stated that she was concerned and worried because she had not heard of some of these requirements before.

Ms. Nelson attended the workshop on assessing Gen. Ed. programs. There was discussion on the pros and cons of short and sweet lists of goals versus a long, detailed one. We need to get more info out about the Gen. Ed. goals over and over rather than in a single item that is long and detailed. With regard to Institutional Review Board, (IRB), issues, we need informed consent from every student. In another workshop with Dr. Gerald Lord as the presenter, there was discussion of compliance standard 3.5.1 as one of the most cited deficiencies as applied to graduates only. Another problem area is with faculty terminal degrees.

Dr. King attended the same Gen. Ed. Assessment session as Ms. Nelson. He said he has lots of rubrics if anybody needs one. When assessing undergraduates, we are only responsible for majors, not minors. He also stated that 3.5.1 causes a lot of disturbance. For ways of assessing graduates, some look at capstone and portfolio assessment. A major reason for being cited was due to making a change without sufficient time for assessment prior to an audit, especially in Gen. Ed. areas. Another workshop Dr. King attended covered Gen. Ed. reform in what he said was an excellent presentation. They went through the process in a collaborative way with campus consensus involving a freshman program,

orientation, Jack type camp, summer reading, and linked courses with experience and service learning drawn in. However, this would require an expenditure of up to \$400,000 to send staff to conferences to build a large knowledge base, develop a resource center, etc. In the end it comes down to: can they do what we say they can do, and only assessment of graduates can tell us that.

Dr. Berry attended a session on learning centered effectiveness that had some good ideas and another on institutional leadership that was interesting, citing a book by Peter Eckel. A couple of other sessions were also interesting, mentioning one by Catherine Wellberg from TCU on the culture of assessment. Dr. Berry commented that culture is SFA's biggest challenge; the true purpose is student learning and to assess a student's level of learning, not the teacher's style or ability. In the session with Dr. Lord, the main reasons noted for schools being cited were in the areas of institutional effectiveness, Gen. Ed. Requirements, 3.5.1, and faculty qualifications. In this last area on faculty, Dr. Berry stated that we know we have qualified teachers; we just have to document properly what we know we have at SFA. Dr. Berry is reassured about substantive change and stated that many others are worse off than we are.

Mr. Gallant stated that he was a bean counter in sessions with other bean counters, and maybe he should have cross pollinated with non-bean counters. It is his job to demonstrate financial stability to support the academic programs provided by SFA. He said he was struck by a statement that we must be careful to design a QEP that is appropriately narrow and focused and that we are accurately funding the QEP that we say we have. Mr. Gallant has spoken to his directors about the timeline for 2010 financial reports to be ready for the SACS audit, as well as the comptroller's audit and also about how we support the mission of the college with financial diligence.

Ms. Lias attended several sessions, none of which she said really had anything to do with her job, but offered useful information nonetheless. The most interesting session was with Brian Gassell, and it focused on writing and editing. Key points discussed were the use of the same language online and in print, deciding early who authors and editors will be, making preparations for teaching faculty how to write effectively, being careful of plagiarism, avoiding long reports that might be ambiguous (need to condense info), launching a preemptive strike (which we've already done by setting up our committees), using language of principles and parallel syntax, being consistent with titles, not overusing bullets, and preparing well ahead of time.

**Other Information Items:** Ms. Hall offered a few comments about TracDat. They are almost ready for documenting assessments on campus and plan to offer workshops on this process during the spring semester. She stated that Ms. Nelson is working on a user guide to aide those entering information into the system. Ms. Hall also inquired about when work with the sub-committees will begin, and Dr. Standley indicated that is a topic for the next meeting.

**The next meeting will be held Wednesday, January 14, 2:00-3:00 pm, in the Boardroom.**

The meeting was adjourned at 3:15 p.m.

**Recorder:** Ms. Cathy Michaels