

University Assessment Steering Council
December 13, 2016
Minutes

Present: Dr. Ric Berry, Dr. Todd Brown, Dr. Jannah Nerren, Dr. Debbie Pace, Dr. Mark Sanders, Mr. Scott Shattuck, Dr. Christina Sinclair, Dr. Hans Williams, Dr. Courtney Wooten

Guest: Dr. Steve Bullard and Mr. John Calahan

Dr. Nerren opened the meeting at 3:00 pm by welcoming Dr. Christina Sinclair to the University Assessment Steering Council (UASC). Dr. Sinclair is from the Department of Kinesiology and Health Science and is replacing Dr. Nerren as the council representative from the College of Education.

Dr. Bullard presented a gift to Dr. Nerren, thanking her for her service and leadership of the council. He also presented each council member with a box of cookies in appreciation for their work. After announcing that Dr. Pace had agreed to serve as chair of the council effective January 1, 2017, he gave a brief summary of some key ideas he took from sessions attended at the recent 2016 SACSCOC Conference in Atlanta. He added that we want to continue to learn from other institutions and that this is a good time to review our current assessment practices and recommend changes designed to improve the effectiveness and culture of assessment at SFA.

Mr. John Calahan, Interim Director of the Office of Student Learning and Institutional Assessment (OSLIA), reported to the council on three topics.

1. SFA's 5th Year SACS Report (due March 17)

- Mr. Calahan and Dr. Paul Henley also attended the 2016 SACSCOC Conference and spent a significant amount of time attending sessions related to the 5th year report and examining exemplars provided by SACS. Mr. Calahan distributed a summary report of his notes and recommendations based on attendance at the 2016 SACSCOC Conference.
- He reported that although facilities and faculty qualifications are two areas that often cause problems for institutions being reviewed, the majority of compliance issues in response to SACSCOC reviews were in the area of institutional effectiveness standard 3.3.1, especially with regard to lack of action plans or evidence of improvement.
- SFA has a significant number of assessment reports in which reported results include noted deficiencies but no action plans in response. Staff in the OSLIA are in the process of reviewing reports to be included with submission of the 5th year report. As they find minor issues like misspellings or errors in calculations, they are correcting; however, more significant issues are being noted and will be reported to departments for correction. Mr. Calahan expects to have this process completed by Friday, December 16, and will distribute the targeted reports to the appropriate units with requests for edits. Faculty will need to make the edits fairly quickly in order to meet deadlines for completing the draft report which is to be reviewed by SFA faculty prior to submission.
- Mr. Calahan explained that SACS does not provide any guidance on the number of representative assessment reports that should be submitted with the 5th year report. In response to a council member's question, Mr. Calahan indicated that Drs. Brunson and King

had decided to submit 50% of all reports from every category and each relevant time period as representative samples.

2. Core Curriculum Assessment

- Mr. Calahan referenced the 2014 core curriculum assessment plan, noting that it specifies assessing core objectives at both the entry and senior levels.
- He reported that the Core Curriculum Assessment Committee (CCAC) is currently trying to develop some proposals of different ways to capture and analyze senior level data. The CCAC is also considering whether the university should revise the core curriculum assessment plan.

3. General Comments

- Mr. Calahan reported that there are two basic views of the purpose of assessment: institutional effectiveness or compliance. He stated that although our current practices are aligned with best practices, we are missing some of the pieces motivating the “why” of assessment. Having a campus culture that is strongly negative about the assessment process puts us at risk. Mr. Calahan believes that our current process requires a total overhaul and that changing our culture of compliance will require meeting one-on-one with chairs and other faculty. He wants to work with the UASC to improve our process while meeting compliance needs.
- In response, Dr. Bullard commented that with the 5th year report nearing completion, we have a great opportunity for a total transformation of our process. As an example, Dr. Bullard referenced the SACS conference presentation by LeTourneau University describing the massive revision of their process that is reforming the assessment culture on their campus. He added that he has asked a small group of faculty to think about how to measure transformational experiences.
- Mr. Calahan reported that he and Dr. Henley have viewed webinars from other institutions on their assessment practices. He is looking for creative (e.g., focus groups of alumni) and less intrusive methods of gathering data for program effectiveness and core assessment, and he believes that we already have access to data at the institutional level that could be leveraged for this purpose. Mr. Calahan is also investigating various tools, including revisions to TracDat, that might prove more useful and cost effective for our purposes.
- In response to a question from Dr. Bullard about the status of the non-academic affairs side of assessment, Mr. Calahan responded that reports from all areas are being included in the review process. He added that up to this point the UASC has had no assessment plan but that one will be put in place going forward.
- Mr. Calahan noted that it is important to tie our assessment to the current strategic plan.
- In response to Dr. Brown’s question about what we can do to improve productivity, Mr. Calahan noted that there are a variety of ways to address the issue but that it is important that we all speak the same language.

Following these discussions with Dr. Bullard and Mr. Calahan, council members briefly held added discussion on the topics outlined below.

- The council approved minutes from the November 16 meeting with no revisions. These minutes will be posted to the UASC website.
- Dr. Nerren distributed a handout explaining the various assessment-related “activity types” that Ms. Karyn Hall has added to the service category within Digital Measures. Related instructions

have also been added to the Digital Measures Reference Guide. Unit heads need to be informed that these new activity types are available.

- Mr. Joe Strahl in the College of Education will continue to support the UASC website and Dr. Pace will communicate directly with him regarding posting of minutes or other information to be linked through that site.
- On the topic of key ideas gleaned at the 2016 SACSCOC Conference, Dr. Nerren said that she found the session on using a coaching model for faculty support very helpful. Dr. Pace added that all of the sessions she attended confirmed that SACS supports collecting meaningful data in a manageable way to improve student learning.
- Dr. Nerren encouraged council members to go to the SACSCOC 2016 Conference website to access handouts from most of the concurrent session presentations.

Action Steps:

- Dr. Nerren will distribute information about the additions to Digital Measures to deans and department chairs.
- Dr. Nerren will send an email noting changes in the UASC and re-emphasizing the importance of communication through the council members and the UASC website. She will also ask Mr. Strahl to change the email address for receipt of questions and comments to the UASC comment box.

The meeting adjourned 4:30 pm.