

University Assessment Steering Council
April 15th, 2016
Minutes

Present: Dr. Todd Brown, Dr. Anjum Najmi, Dr. Jannah S Nerren, Dr. Deborah Pace, Dr. Louise Stoehr, Dr. Robert Szafran, Prof. Scott Shattuck, Dr. Richard Berry, Dr. Mark Sanders

Guest: Dr. Steve Bullard

Not present: Dr. Hans Williams (scheduling conflict)

Composition of Committee and Procedural Guidelines Discussion with Dr. Bullard:

- Dr. Bullard attended the University Assessment Steering Council (UASC) meeting to clarify the Council's charge and address questions and concerns from members of the Council.
- He referred to the draft of the UASC description (bullet # 2) stating the purpose of UASC is to re-engage faculty and provide support to improve student learning outcomes and the accreditation process.
- Dr. Bullard encouraged the Council to make recommendations as they see necessary to improve the process of assessment and the flow of communication on campus.
- Dr. Bullard believes the UASC should provide recommendations to colleges and departments as the need arises.
- Dr. Bullard believes the UASC should bring issues and concerns about assessment to his attention and to advisors in the Office of Student Learning and Institutional Assessment (OSLIA) for discussion and resolution.
- Members of the UASC sought to clarify the role of the Council, recommending it should be more of a sounding board for advice and not for enforcing rules of assessment. For example, if Department X in a college is facing issues with assessment requirements then the UASC could approach them to clarify the difficulties and provide feedback. The UASC would communicate the problem to Dr. Bullard for consultation, if needed, with the OSLIA for discussion and resolution. The UASC would not manage the details of the process; that would still remain the responsibility of the chairs and deans at the college level.
- Dr. Bullard affirmed this idea. The intention is to provide a way for colleges to communicate with each other, possibly facilitating opportunities for departments to learn from others who have successfully crafted an effective assessment process.
- Dr. Bullard gave the UASC the authority to make recommendations for change but he cautioned members to be mindful of making a recommendation that might endanger the SACS accreditation process. He suggested that it would be helpful if Council members had a thorough understanding of the SACS 5 year

report process, enabling members to document the rationale for recommended changes, as needed.

- Dr. Bullard re-stated that assessment should connect with student learning and that it is important to take action steps when necessary, but with substantive thought, so the process is allowed to evolve and mature. It is important to describe the changes made to the assessment processes, so that when review teams come in they can see why the changes were made.
- Dr. Bullard mentioned that he hopes the UASC recommendations will assist Dr. Larry King in preparing the SACS report due in March 2017.
- Dr. Bullard said that due to recent personnel changes, staffing in the Office of Student Learning and Institutional Assessment (OSLIA) was being considered. The assistant director position is open and has been posted. Additionally, there is the possibility of a faculty member being appointed to the office who would shadow Dr. Larry King to understand the SACS accreditation process. This person would be available to work across campus with Chairs and Deans of colleges to assist faculty in meeting the requirements for accreditation.
- Dr. Mary Nelle Brunson is the campus liaison for SACS accreditation, and could be a person to go to about issues that are unclear.
- The UASC addressed what they see as extraneous levels of assessment that are in place at the college level, for example, the Educational Support Unit Assessment Reports from department chairs. The goal of changes in this area is to improve the assessment process and results while reducing unnecessary burdens on chairs and deans.
- Dr. Bullard gave the Council authority to recommend such changes as seen necessary.

Rethinking Process and Assessment Discussion:

- Dr. Robert Szafran moved that the Council endorse the recommendation put forth by the Associate Deans' Forum to:
 1. Eliminate all Educational Support Unit Assessment Reports for department chairs, and
 2. Eliminate the Annual Department Chair Reports and the deans' Internal Report.
- The motion was seconded by Dr. Debbie Pace. After discussion, a vote was taken. Dr. Berry abstained; all others voted in favor.
- There is inconsistency in the way data is gathered from college to college and insufficient documentation on how meaningful the data is to the assessment process. The Council agreed there is a need to look more closely at the process at the college level.
- Dr. Todd Brown gave an example of how the College of Business has revised their learning goals almost completely with faculty focused on two questions: "What do we want our students to learn?" and "What do we want students to take away when they graduate from the program?" Goals were kept simple, identifying one or two like critical thinking, communication. Establishing a baseline measure was important for evaluating progress during the program

and documenting what a student takes away upon graduation. Evaluating the whole process and considering the trajectory were both important. For example, if a student came in to the program performing at 10% of the desired level and improved to 50% of that level by the end of the program, then there was progress. Starting with these strategies at the course level and then moving it to the program level proved best. Indirect assessment measures such as the exit interview with the chair and then following up with graduates and the companies who hire them to determine what skills they were looking for is also important. Drawing lines between old and new and demonstrating that nothing had been eliminated from the updated programs helps to create faculty buy-in .

SACS 5-Year Report Discussion:

- The Council requests more information on the responsibilities of the Core Curriculum Assessment Committee.
- Members of the Council feel that assessment summaries from college reports may not be fully accurate. Because of this, Dr. Nerren proposed Chairs and Deans review the assessment summaries, and then look into the reports or possible issues for their respective units. Dr. Pace agreed and added that there are additional time-sensitive issues for consideration by this council, including the current college-level report review process and rubrics used for those reviews.
- The UASC believes that the assessment process at SFA may be outdated and that the process of change should be documented as SACS looks for credible evidence to support change. The reasons for change can be both quantitative and qualitative and may require assistance from the OSLIA. UASC members agreed that additional information about the SACS 5 year report and accreditation is needed. For example, it would be useful to look at other institutions in Texas and their process for meeting accreditation requirements. The Council will investigate funding to support some of the training activities, such as making site visits, having other institutions visit campus, or attending professional development (such as the SACS Summer Institute).
- Dr. Deborah Pace offered to work with Dr. Robert Szafran to draft a proposal to the Council and to Dr. Bullard for a day of presentations at SFA by spokespersons from other schools that use assessment models that differ from SFA's current model. The purpose would be to educate the Council on a range of assessment approaches being used by Texas public universities.

Action Steps for next meeting:

- Dr. Nerren will email the minutes to Council members from February 25 and March 4th for final approval. The UASC organization chart, UASC composition and responsibilities as well as recommendations made by the Council will be included for review and approval.

- On approval these documents will be posted to the UASC website. An email will be distributed to provide information about the University Assessment Steering Council and its new website.
- Dr. Nerren will forward to Dr. Bullard the Council's recommendation to support the recommendations put forth by the Associate Deans' Forum to eliminate the Educational Support Unit Assessment Reports for department chairs and both the Annual Department Chair Reports and the deans' Internal Reports.
- Dr. Nerren will consult with Dr. Bullard regarding funding for some Council members to attend the SACS Summer Institute or the SACSCOC annual winter conference.