Assessment Planning Committee Minutes
10/21/2009

Minutes prepared by Melinda Costello
Attended: Catherine Crohan (Library), Melinda Costello (School of Business, chair),
Fr. Linh Hoang (School of Liberal Arts), Penny Brunner (Associate VPAA, ex officio),
Linda Richardson (VPAA)

1. R. Blasting (Dean, School of Liberal Arts) presented the AAC&U report titled
   “Engaging Departments” (attached). The report proposes assessing students’
   accomplishments of college-wide learning goals within individual departments.
   The committee members discussed this option and concluded that once the core
   has been determined, it may be possible that some aspect of the college-wide
   learning goals might be best assessed at the major level. This cannot be
determined until the core is decided and the course-level learning goals related to
the college-level learning goals have been identified.

2. Next meeting

   The next meeting is Wednesday, October 28, 2009, from 4:00-5:00 p.m.

   The APC members will bring samples of syllabi and course-level learning goals
to the meeting. We will discuss these in preparation for a faculty workshop
planned in conjunction with the Committee on Teaching and Faculty
Development.
Context
Our initial goal was to “create a framework for assessing the General Education Core.” We specifically wanted to “create and implement assessment techniques that measure the common learning goals across disciplines.”

Summary results of the Institute experience
We quickly realized that the process we envisioned was flawed. Catherine Geary Schneider’s opening remarks on the integrative major and sessions with other presenters caused us to re-think the most effective ways to create a culture of assessment. We decided to find a way to integrate General Education and Major assessment within the disciplines.

Question 1: What are the team’s specific curricular, pedagogical, and/or process plans once it returns to campus for advancing the project worked on at the Institute?
We plan to work with individual departments to find out how they can assess their students’ accomplishments of college-wide learning goals as they implement their own departmental assessment plans. Because departmental learning goals are derived from the more general college goals, department faculty should be able to make their own evaluations of the degree to which their students are meeting both aspects of learning. Example: one College learning goal is “informed reasoning.” The History Department uses a capstone research project to assess its own goals, but the faculty should also be able to evaluate the level of “informed reasoning” apparent in those projects. The Finance Department might see “informed reasoning” from a different disciplinary point of view, but can still evaluate their students’ abilities in that area. Their responses would be a part of their regular assessment activities, requiring minimal additional work. The annual assessment report goes to the Assessment Advisory Committee, who would then look for patterns of strength or weakness in meeting College learning goals.

Question 2: In particular, how does the team plan to share the knowledge, insights, and expertise gained during the Institute with colleagues on campus?
The first audience for our plan will be the College Assessment Advisory Committee, made up of assessment representatives from the three divisions. This committee is charged with advancing departmental assessment plans and coordinating data. We see our plan as supportive of their efforts. At the same time, their guiding principles encourage departmental control of assessment processes. Our proposal to them will recommend three steps:
1. Ask departments which of the six College learning goals are most important to them. Ask where those goals are being addressed in their major, and where they think they should be addressed in the proposed General Education core (42 credits).
2. Offer examples of best practices that enhance student learning in the disciplines, and point towards possible assessment techniques. Recommend beginning with a small number of volunteer pilot departments.
3. Assessment Advisory Committee receives and reviews departmental responses to uncover patterns in our students’ achievement of College learning goals.
With preliminary data and with support of the Assessment Advisory Committee, propose to the Board of Instruction (curriculum committee) a formalization of the process of collecting General Education assessment data through the disciplines. (The BOI is the elected faculty committee which recommends curricular policy to the VPAA.)

**Timeline: 1 Sept 09 – 30 May 10**

This pilot process could take an academic year, but this is a good year to do it. The new Gen Ed Core has been proposed but not approved. Presuming approval in fall 09, the next step will be to tie the new Core to College Learning Goals, and to assure that those goals are intentionally addressed in Core courses. Most departments are in the early stages of regular assessment in the major. By spring 2011, we will be collecting departmental assessment responses for the major and for General Education.

**Guiding Principles for the new Process**

1. Support faculty’s integration of those College learning goals which are most central to their disciplines.
2. Proceed in small, incremental steps: pilot the process, seek ongoing feedback

“Engaging Departments” Institute Team: Ralph Blasting (Dean of Liberal Arts); Fr. Linh Hoang (Asst. Prof. Religious Studies); Dr. Patricia Trutty-Coohill (Prof. and Chair of Creative Arts); Dr. Robin Voetterl (Assoc. Prof. and Chair of Education).
Siena College Learning Goals

As a learning community and liberal arts college grounded in its Franciscan and Catholic heritage, Siena affirms the following learning goals:

**Learning Goal 1. Informed reasoning (Reason)**

Students will think critically and creatively to make reasoned and informed judgments. Through engagement with contemporary and enduring questions of human concern, students will solve problems in ways that reflect the integration of knowledge across general and specialized studies, and they will demonstrate competence in information literacy and independent research.

**Learning Goal 2. Effective communication (Rhetoric)**

Students will read a variety of texts with comprehension and critical involvement, write effectively for a variety of purposes and audiences, speak knowledgably, and listen with discernment and empathy.

**Learning Goal 3. Meaningful reflection (Reflection)**

Students will comprehend that learning is a life-long process and that personal growth, marked by concern and care for others, is enhanced by intellectual and spiritual exploration.

**Learning Goal 4. Regard for human solidarity and diversity (Regard)**

Students will affirm the unity of the human family, uphold the dignity of individuals, and delight in diversity. They will demonstrate intercultural knowledge and respect.

**Learning Goal 5. Reverence for creation (Reverence)**

Students will demonstrate a reverence for creation. They will develop a worldview that recognizes the benefits of sustaining our natural and social worlds.

**Learning Goal 6. Moral responsibility (Responsibility)**

Students will commit to building a world that is more just, peaceable, and humane. They will lead through service.

*Approved by the Board of Instruction, November 18, 2008*