

University Assessment Committee
May 10, 2010
Meeting Minutes

In Attendance:

Carol Gittens (CG), Josef Hellebrandt (JH), Bruce Lescher (BL), Dan Lewis (DL), Ed McQuarrie (EM), Cynthia Mertens (CM), Monica Parikh (MP), Chuck Powers (CP),
Special Guests: Conor Roycroft (CR), Office of Institutional Research, and Yutaka Niino, Graduate Intern for Office of Assessment

TOPIC 1: Assessing "Student Success" (A required essay for the WASC Educational Effectiveness Report)

Invited Guest for Topic 1: Conor Roycroft

BACKGROUND: The UAC members were provided with the following documents prior the meeting to provide context for this discussion¹: 1) WASC "Two Lenses on Diversity"; 2) "Table B" excerpted from the WASC Handbook on Accreditation; 3) "Appendix B" from SCU's Capacity and Preparatory Report for WASC.

During the meeting the UAC was asked to brainstorm on what indicators could be identified in our respective units to look at student success (recruitment, retention, grad rates, climate).

EM pointed out that when one reviews the Table B prepared for the WASC Capacity Report it can be concluded that SCU has high rates of retention and graduation across different student groups and these may not be easily raised. Therefore we may want to determine recruitment as our real focus moving forward.

Others on the committee agreed with the conclusion that our rates for retention and graduation may be high but that we cannot assume that these figures are indicative or descriptive of students' experiences at SCU and therefore a focus on factors that influence campus climate are also necessarily part of the discussion.

The group came to the agreement that we would approach this brainstorming task by enumerating what we currently do in our respective units to promote student success as defined by recruitment, retention, graduation rate and climate. Furthermore, to assistant Conor (Institutional Research) and Carol (Office of Assessment) if UAC members were aware of data sets or other forms of evidence that are maintained within their unit they would make mention of these sources.

Leavey School of Business (LSB) has the following programs and data source:

- Undergrad Senior Survey
- Satisfaction survey at MBA level
 - EM will offline forward to CR and CG

¹ These documents are available from the SCU "WASC" website

The Law School has the following:

-- CM offered that the Law School strives for economic diversity – and asked if that was one of the categories. CR responded by saying that we have not adopted an institutional definition of what this means.

--They have data tracking on race/ethnicity...

--MP asked about disaggregating based on 1st generation status and CM said it's tracked. CR mentioned we could track who apply for financial aid as well to get at economic diversity.

--Law School uses an alumni survey further out than six months...

Student Life

--Student Life Assessment Committee is looking at data that have been collected through campus surveys to identify other areas of climate/student success to fill in gap.

School of Engineering (ENGR)

--DL asked a question about how Institutional Research plans to measure graduation rate among part-time students or students who only come for one or two courses at a time for various reasons (time, interest, reimbursement from employers, availability)

--ENGR is susceptible to economic fluctuations which impact recruitment – DL didn't know if there have been any strategic recruitment efforts in ENGR regarding diversity.

LSB (in response to DL's comments)

-- Enrollments less cyclical than Engineering but also fluctuates

--Fundamentally draw from Silicon Valley corporate community

--EM mentioned the likelihood that this would also be true for ECP

--EM asserted that the categories for race/ethnicity used by the university don't come close to representing the categories in LSB (e.g. East Asian)

--CR mentioned an ongoing effort to synchronize the race/ethnicity categories used across campus but noted that graduate programs control their own applications. The graduate programs can collect data on application at the six higher categories used by the university or 40 more specific categories (this is what appears on the Common Application)

General Comments:

--CP commented on goals of a SCU education (which we should consider as beyond what WASC is looking for in terms of student success)

--MP and CG confirmed that the EER report will talk about the undergraduate Core Curriculum as being mission-centric

--MP also mentioned the Eduventures report (replication of the McQuarrie study) using data from the Freshman Survey and College Senior Survey produced by CIRP that looked at issues of diversity and the "3 C's" but these surveys are only completed by undergraduates

Jesuit School of Theology (JST)

--First year that BL has been involved in these discussions on his campus

--IPEDS data are tracked by the GTU and maintained in Datatel system but 1/3 of JST students are international and IPEDS is only broken down for US students
--JST is small, 125 FTE's this semester and they only have four programs but retention rates for small programs look very out of proportion because of low enrollment numbers e.g., losing one of four students in a program looks like only a 75% retention rate) so JST only reported these student success indicators for its two larger programs
--For international students the JST has huge writing program for students who are writing thesis in 2rd, 3rd or 4th language.

--MP asked if LSB or ENGR can take undergraduate math, writing, or foundation courses

- ENGR says yes, up to 20 units
- LSB says policies are different, and that the writing support at grad level fairly poor
- Law – retention of students who speak English as their second language is a concern particularly because writing issues come up as well so the Law School is putting in much writing support

--CR says SCU does collect ethnicity data from international students and reported it to WASC

Other general comments on Topic 1:

--DL commented that CR may want to know that issues of gender (recruitment of females) are a focus in the Engineering School

--two years ago a consultant came to DL's department to do study of recruit/retention of females in Computer Engineering. Report was generated and department set recruitment goals and new majors (Ruth Davis should have a copy of that report)

-- CP mentioned a past study of retention in the pre-health programs (*Silicon Valley Notebook*, volume 1, 2002). One finding was that 1st generation students may be quicker to leave the pre-health track than other students receiving the same scores on tests and assignments in the early science courses, because of the way in which feedback is "heard" or interpreted. Since that time, more attention has been paid to the way in which options are discussed and feedback is conveyed. This is a more time intensive approach to advising, in the best Santa Clara tradition, and CP believes that pre-health retention of first generation students, as well as professional school placement of first generation students, has improved as a result. Data on this might be available from S. Fedder.

TOPIC 2: Feedback on Annual Assessment Report Response Letters

-- EM pointed out that there will be a temptation toward verbosity and recommended the following useful rhetorical strategy – Cover Letter for boilerplate language and then start substance on subsequent page (using bullet points)

--To whom, if anyone, should the letter be CC's?

- Overwhelming sentiment by group that “yes” the letters need to be cc'd to the Dean (including associate dean in the case of the LSB)

- A compromise position was discussed where a separate letter to Dean's office be generated that summarized the contents of the response letters going to chairs with a recommendation that the dean's office consult the chair for further information. This alternative was not supported with the same enthusiasm by the UAC because the members felt that chairs may be uncomfortable with a separate letter going to the dean that had not been viewed by the department.

--CG would like to consult with the respective area representatives when preparing letters for each academic School / College before finalizing drafts

TOPIC 3: Feedback and recommendations regarding the continuation of the FSAAC

Per the request of Edward Schaefer and Dan Ostrov of the FSAAC, the UAC members were asked to discuss their impressions of the usefulness of continuing to have a FSAAC on campus.

--CP mentioned that there was a lot of energy in the Faculty Senate when assessment was discussed last year

--The UAC agreed that it was good to have a structured mechanism for hearing voices from faculty

-- CG mentioned that the continuation of the FSAAC was on the agenda for the Faculty Senate Council meeting on Wednesday May 12th and that the topic is likely to also be on the agenda for the upcoming UAC-FSAAC joint spring meeting.

--General conclusion from the UAC - maybe give one more year before disbanding?

Closing Comments:

-- CG thanked the membership of the UAC for their year's work on this committee and particularly recognized CP who will be rotating off the UAC because he will be on a year-long sabbatical in 2010-11.

-- It is hoped that next year the UAC will be able to identify a standing meeting time (e.g., "third Monday of the month at a X time") but realizes that this may be challenging given everyone's busy schedules. An attempt will be made in August to poll everyone to see if a stable meeting time can be set.

-- Reminder that the joint UAC-FSAAC spring meeting will be coming up on May 19th from 3-4:30 PM.

Meeting was adjourned at 11 AM.