University Assessment Council
Minutes of the January 11, 2011 Meeting

Present: Ellen Byrne, Anne Chandler, Jan Chlebowski, Jeff Delafuente, Herschell Emery, Vennie Filippas, Patty Gray, Christina Lindholm, James Mays, Lex Tartaglia, Gaurav Gupta, Kathy Ingram, Scott Oates

Minutes from November 2, 2010

- The minutes were approved.

Announcements (Scott Oates)

- Assessment 101 Workshops. Scott will conduct a three-session Assessment 101 workshop series, which will run once before Spring Break and repeat in April. He distributed a description of the sessions. The target audience includes: (a) programs that may need a refresher about assessment or may need to enhance their assessment plan, and (b) programs that need to get started with assessment. If possible, Scott would like a team of two people to represent a department/program, so assessment is not viewed as one person's responsibility. Scott envisions that these workshops will be offered on an ongoing basis and that some advanced workshops will be added in the future. Participants should register online through the VCU Training website. (Scott will forward the registration link to the Assessment Council.) The dates are as follows and all sessions will be held in the CTE, Harris 5182:

Winter Session	Spring Session
Tuesdays	Wednesdays
2:30-4:00	10:00-11:30
February 15, 22; March 1	April 6, 13, 20

- NSSE Schedule. Scott gave an overview of the plan for administering NSSE (National Survey of Student Engagement).
  - On February 9, the following students will receive an email (signed by Provost Warren and by Scott) inviting them to participate in NSSE: (a) all students with first-year standing (≤ 25 credits), and (b) all students with senior standing (≥ 85 credits). Scott wants to encourage faculty to promote student participation in NSSE. He also stated that we will be able to disaggregate the data by school.
  - Council members raised two concerns about how first-year and senior standing are defined: (a) students who enter VCU with more than 25 credits (e.g., many students in the Honors College) will not be included in the first-year sample; and (b) students who accumulate 85 credits by the time they are juniors (e.g., many Honors, Engineering, and Allied Health Professions students) will be included in the senior sample even though they are juniors in level of experience. Scott reported that we probably need to keep the 25 and 85 credit hour definitions for the 2011 administration of NSSE but that we can change the criteria the next time we use the survey. He also stated that we can pay NSSE for over-sampling, if needed.

Assessment Council Mission Statement: Approval

- After a brief discussion, the Assessment Council Mission Statement (draft 1.0, November 2, 2010) was approved unanimously.

Assessment Plan Review

- Scott outlined his proposal for reviewing assessment plans for student learning outcomes. This would be an ongoing institutional process. It would take 3 years to complete the review cycle for all academic programs at VCU. The reasons for the plan are: (1) to help programs improve student learning, and (2) to give feedback to programs about their WEAVE reports.
- Scott distributed a handout (*Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes; Values, Standards, and Criteria for Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes*) that described the kind of evidence that would satisfy the review criteria and what the reporting format might look like. Council members discussed the rubric for assessing student learning outcomes, including the values of transparency, integrity, and efficacy. Suggestions included the following:
  - ❑ Make explicit the link between this review process and what programs are reporting in WEAVE.
  - ❑ This process could be seen as a way of "scorecarding WEAVE," with the intent to provide programs with useful information about strengths and areas for improvement.
  - ❑ For each review criterion, provide clarification and examples of evidence.
  - ❑ Develop definitions for key terms (e.g., *goals, outcomes*), and include a cross-walk for terms used by discipline-specific accreditors.
  - ❑ Recognize that discipline accreditors have an important impact on the way programs approach assessment of student learning.
  - ❑ Link the assessment plan review process to forms used at VCU for curriculum approval.
  - ❑ Clarify for the VCU community what "academic freedom" means and emphasize that assessment review is not intended to impinge on academic freedom.
  - ❑ As much as possible, try to coordinate the assessment plan review process with other initiatives, such as program review.
- Scott distributed drafts of an *Assessment Plan Review Schedule* (Versions A and B) to show what a 3-year cycle of formative feedback to programs might look like. One version separates undergraduate from graduate programs; the other version groups programs solely by school/college.
- We will continue to discuss the assessment plan review process during our next meeting.

Next Meeting:

Tuesday, February 8
12:30-2:00