Minutes of the Core Review Committee
10 September 2009

The CRC met on 10 September 2009 at 11:00 AM in the GIS conference room (SLC 143).

Members present: Brian Whitman, KarenBeth Bohan, Greg Castelli, John Hepp, Susan Hritzak, Andy Miller, Gina Morrison, Amy Patton, Philip Simon, Ernie Trujillo, Bridgette Zielinski

Dr Whitman called the meeting to order. The minutes of 7 May 2009 were approved as written.

Announcements

Dr. Simon announced that there were no updates on the creation of the CRC website.

Old Business

Writing Across the Curriculum

A revision of the PHYSICS/ENGINEERING WAC PROPOSAL was presented for approval. When the proposal was initially discussed (3 Feb 09), the CRC requested that assessment component be elaborated more fully. Although there is minimal change in this revision, Dr. Whitman assured the Committee that ABET has numerous specific writing outcomes, hence specific outcomes are implicit in the proposal. Concern was raised whether writing was included in required courses. Although not explicit in the proposal, this concern had been addressed to the committee’s satisfaction when the original proposal was discussed in February. The revised proposal was approved.

With this proposal approved, only two departments remain without approved WAC programs: Integrative Media and Nursing.

GenEd Assessment

Dr. Whitman presented the summer subcommittee’s report to the full CRC.

MAPP TESTING: Last year’s pilot run of the MAPP test indicated that a larger data set is needed. The CRC has received permission to double the sample size this year (200 Freshmen and 200 Seniors). Even with this larger sample, however, it is doubtful that subgroup data will be significant. Given the bias introduced by the self-selected participants last year (i.e., the better students were more willing to participate), the committee anticipates requiring the exam of randomly selected students in FYF and senior capstone courses. Although this will ensure a more representative sample, the concern was raised that students, seeing this as an imposed requirement, will not take it seriously. It was also suggested that, periodically, an entire class be tested to allow subgroup data to be culled.

FYF (and Diversity): Dr. Morrison pointed out that the FYF assessment does not address the low percentage of students feeling a need to promote racial understanding. Several factors which may have contributed to this result were suggested by other members, including 1) that incoming students took the survey before their freshman year, so it reflects their starting point, not their attitudes on graduating, and 2) that the wording of the question sounds like a call to activism (“promotion”) rather than to tolerance and understanding. Dr. Simon explained that different FYF instructors address diversity in different ways; indeed, there is diversity among the FYF professors.

The committee agreed that it would be more meaningful to assess students later than the freshman year: for example, as part of the senior survey or as part of the upcoming survey of alumni and employers. This might be best addressed once the present Middle states assessment has been completed. Efforts should be coordinated with the Diversity office.
Otherwise, the committee agreed that the FYF assessment mechanism is fine as it is.

**Written Communication:** Although nearly all departments have WAC strategies, no communication mechanism is included in the WAC plan. The CRC should prepare an outline of the information needed, and request that departments submit their reports by a given date so that the committee may summarize them. As several committee members’ programs already have reporting mechanisms, these will be circulated and used to prepare example reports, to accompany the request. Lessons learned in the first assessment-cycle, of which we should be mindful, include: 1) We need a hammer ensure departmental compliance. The Associate Provost should provide this. 2) Flexibility is important: a single-size reporting mechanism fits none. 3) Receipt of the reports should be acknowledged, and department chairs must feel that the information will actually be used.

**Quantitative Reasoning/Computer Literacy:** The summer subcommittee recommended that artifacts be collected from a broader range of courses than they were in last year’s cycle.

**Critical Thinking:** Although higher than that of the comparison group, the Wilkes CT subscore on the MAPP test was very low (8% proficient). While the committee agrees that CT should also be assessed by means other than the MAPP, it is not obvious how to do so. Indeed, it was noted that CT is necessary for all programs, although its assessment is not addressed. As the FYF instructors are charged with helping freshmen develop their abilities to think critically, the FYF courses seem a good place to begin assessment. Dr. Simon will forward the URL of a pamphlet on CT that he finds useful. We should also see how others assess CT, lest we reinvent the wheel.

**GenEd Distribution Areas:** The current version of Program Review form proved to be a defective mechanism for acquiring GenEd assessment data. On the other hand, to lessen the burden of preparation, the GenEd information should not be requested as a separate document. The committee agreed to request that the administration include questions that specifically target the GenEd courses on future forms. Given the “one size fits none” problems with last year’s reporting mechanism, it might be best to tell the departments what information is needed and let them report it in the manner they find most suitable. A balance will need to be found between providing too many parameters and none.

**Survey of Alumni Employers:** Paired questions for surveying employers can take the forms “How well do former Wilkes students perform [a given skill]?” and “How important is [this skill] to the job.” This format will provide a sense of which skills employers value, which may or may not coincide with the skills that we (academics) value. Employers should also be able to add comments regarding skills not specifically asked about. While analyzing the resulting data, we must find a balance between empowering Wilkes graduates in the workplace and becoming a trade university. Dr. Whitman suggested that the AAC&U has relevant surveys, rubrics and comparison data, which will be useful here. They might also be a resource for assessing Critical Thinking.

**GenEd Assessment: Faculty Workshops**

Dr. Whitman reported that Ellen Flint and Vernon Harper are in contact and have a workshop budget. The committee agreed to go forward with the workshop plans proposed by the summer subcommittee.

**Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 12:25.

Next meeting: 6 October 2009.

Respectfully Submitted,  
— Ernie Trujillo