

**College of Arts and Sciences**  
**Dean's Council of Department Chairs**  
Wednesday, April 6, 2011  
Library Conference Room

**Minutes**

**Present:**

Steve Bayne, Chair of Philosophy  
Angela Biselli, Chair of Physics  
Mary Ann Carolan, Chair of Modern Languages and Literatures  
Matt Coleman, Chair of Mathematics & Computer Science  
David Crawford, Chair of Sociology & Anthropology  
Nancy Dallavalle, Chair of Religious Studies  
Janie Leatherman, Director of International Studies  
Mark LeClair, Chair of Economics  
John McCarthy, Chair of Psychology  
Marcie Patton, Chair of Politics  
Aaron Perkus, Associate Dean of University College  
James Simon, Chair of English  
Kraig Steffen, Chair of Chemistry & BioChemistry  
Brian Torff, Chair of Visual and Performing Arts  
Brian Walker, Chair of Biology and Co-Director of LACS  
Maggie Wills, Chair of Communication  
Joan Weiss, Associate Dean of College of Arts and Sciences

**Regrets:**

Cecelia Bucki, Chair of History

**Approval of the Minutes from March 2, 2011**

Dr. Kraig Steffen moved to approve the minutes of March 2, 2011 and Dr. Angela Biselli seconded the motion. The Dean reminded chairs to read the minutes when they are distributed and share issues and discussion with colleagues.

**Assessment Next Steps**

The Dean shared the following next steps relative to assessment:

- Create a culture of assessment to understand our program affectiveness, affirm, and continue to improve high-quality programs that produce high quality outcomes as “value added” to our students through their Fairfield education. Engage in measures of various kinds to show growth in value.
- The Office of Institutional Research does a lot of the aggregate benchmarking with national databases. They help with core and major program assessment, in relation to the assessment of the four-year experience, student/alumni satisfaction, and the holistic evaluation of institutional effectiveness. They are finding what we already know: that freshmen do not like the core, sophomores are beginning to get the core, juniors are beginning to appreciate it as they near completion, and seniors are beginning to see connections between the core to their major. Our alumni have deepest appreciation for the core throughout their lives.

## Next Steps for spring, summer, and 2011-12

### Spring Semester

- CALC early work—Dr. Curt Naser rounds out his term as Academic Assessment Coordinator. Naser produced a snapshot on departmental learning outcomes based on past work not new work.
- Core pathways and UCC—Core Pathways is on the verge of having publishable, measurable, learning outcomes. Endorsing these by UCC will be a key component. The idea is to help students see relationships within the core curriculum and how the Pathways are integrated horizontally. The Pathways should be pulled into other programs; this is not a new core but another way of seeing the core.
- Dean shared individual department handouts relative to assessment, giving departments an opportunity to review this information and update for submission during the June annual report process.
- In terms of program review and department/program-based assessment, the College should move to the next level of this iterative process. Departments and programs should be evaluating and assessing, by asking certain questions, gathering data, and determining if the data is appropriate in answering the questions. A summary of findings to-date, inclusive of both positive and negative outcomes, and department/program level responses to those findings should be created. The process will demonstrate earnest engagement of determining what students have learned.
- Dr. Steve Bayne asked if learning goals and objectives would be published in the course catalog. The Dean commented that these goals should be on the syllabus, could be in the catalog (broadly), and perhaps on the dept web page, etc. The idea is that the learning outcomes are transparent and known to the student.
- The Dean is funding intensive summer workshops and encourages chairs to engage in these initiatives. These workshops will assist departments in identifying program goals. By the fall, departments should be ready to gather artifacts to determine assessment planning, etc. The Dean mentioned that not all departments will be in the same place, and that's okay. Some will be reporting their first assessment protocol and others will be on later iterations. If departments ask one or two good questions each year, they could accomplish the process incrementally.
- Dr. Mary Ann Carolan commented that the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures is thinking of breaking down the various types of courses and reporting on different outcomes learned. The Dean shared that this process was similar to the practices of the English Department, where they assess four or five concentrations, which all have learning outcomes. Carolan asked what level of distinction the department should focus on. We have learning outcomes for the different language courses; we have learning outcomes for literature versus culture courses, etc. The Dean mentioned that these are a level of sophistication that often come after department reviews and commended the MLL department for such deep analysis. Dr. Nancy Dallavalle shared that the Religious Studies Department has learning goals that do not address all courses within their department. The Dean noted that curriculum mapping can help faculty reflect on how best to match up learning goals with courses and vice versa.
- The Dean expressed the importance behind using data to understand, affirm, and improve their curricula, courses, and pedagogy, in relationship to the goals faculty feel are important for their programs.
- In previous years, assessment information has been requested and shared in annual reports though it not necessarily as detailed. The framework and information distributed (the NEASC rubrics) will make annual reporting very clear and straightforward, as well as having the added

benefit of preparing for the NEASC mid-term report in 2012. This process is user friendly and practical for other reporting initiatives and expectations.

- Dr. Aaron Perkus mentioned that the process is a path and each department will be in a different place on the path. Everyone is not expected to be at the end of the path. It is a guideline to follow.
- The Dean outlined the following expectations, which had been previewed at earlier meetings and in some emails:

### ***By end of SUMMER 2011***

- Update measurable learning outcomes published and reported
- Include a clear plan for the next iteration of collecting and analyzing data

### ***Academic year 2011-12***

Departments will engage in the following:

- Collect and analyze artifacts
- Discuss findings
- Report specific changes they have made and/or will make in response to their findings
- Report next iteration of assessment and any revisions to the assessment plan.

### ***Fall 2012 and thereafter***

- Progress and rubrics reported to NEASC
- Departments & Programs continue with assessment

### **Program Review Queue Update**

The Dean mentioned that this is all process oriented work and is iterative. Faculty are coming together around programs that they care about. The interdisciplinary minors do not need to be assessed as frequently and in the same way as other programs. Most interdisciplinary programs have not been reviewed since five years of their creation. The Dean is pleased with the progress made over the past three years. She mentioned that the goal is to be engaged into a common practice. Faculty should be responsible for working towards reaching the following goals.

- Learning goals assessed each year
- Evolution of assessment process
- Program improvements that then are assessed in turn

The Dean mentioned that this work is for the benefit of the students and curricula. It is the responsibility of the faculty and is part of a process that ensures continued program relevance and quality. It would be constructive to get in a habit of answering the highlighted questions every year (from the NEASC rubrics), which also would be used within each department's self-study. The Dean is trying to synchronize all these processes to make them mutually informing and streamlined.

### **ePortfolio – Digication Demonstration**

Dr. Aaron Perkus, Associate Dean of University College and Member of the ePortfolio Task Force presented an overview of Fairfield's ePortfolio initiative designed to display user created representations of learning and achievement.

Perkus offered a basic overview mentioning that typically users create ePorts for one of the following purposes:

- Developmental—Developmental ePortfolio (working portfolio) allows students to select artifacts to demonstrate their development over time. This is commonly associated with rubrics where students upload evidence of emerging and advanced competency of learning outcomes. This type of portfolio is useful for programmatic assessment and accreditation requirements.
- Reflection (learning portfolio) demonstrates the student learning over the course of a class, a semester, or curriculum by selecting artifacts and using reflective writing to show learning over time. Often this portfolio includes drafts of projects, emphasizing where deep learning and engagement occurred. This type of portfolio is used within a course or program, as well as in residential life, co-curricular activities, and departmental advising.
- Showcase (professional portfolio) is an important resume tool as students select artifacts designed to indicate their range and depth of ability for career purposes. These are organized toward the student's professional goals, and often include service learning, work experience, capstone projects, etc. Selection of materials might differ depending on the intended audience.

Perkus shared a four year cycle current and proposed plan that is student centered.

**Year 1**—Core Writing has taken the lead with approximately four or five faculty using Digitation. There will be a May summer workshop available for faculty participation. So far, twelve faculty signed up.

**Year 2 (Planning Year)**— Cornerstone Courses for sophomore students, inclusive of Residential Colleges and Core Pathways. .

**Year 3(Implementing Year)**—Student engagement in study abroad, service learning and internships.

**Year 4**—This year a holistic approach is used, looking at outcomes with different lenses. The focus is vocational discernment and senior capstones. The Dean commented on the usefulness of a time line. While planning assessment work, faculty may want to look at certain questions relative to learning goals. The capstone should be assessed in year four in terms of theme and rollout.

The use of student work can be a helpful assessment tool. While the content is the students and they own the e-portfolio, they could give permission to make it viewable by others. E-portfolio is password protected.

Steffen mentioned one of the challenges with using student work is that the student could decide to eliminate a portion of their portfolio at any time, so while it offers a snapshot of their work and demonstrates outcomes, the artifacts could be removed at the discretion of the student. The Dean commented that the purpose of e-portfolio is for students to develop and share their learning. It is about student learning first and then the University learning from it.

Carolann asked how this program integrated with other existing programs. Perkus commented that there was no direct connection to Digitation with blackboard.

Institutional uses for e-Portfolio were discussed, as well as a distinction between CMA (Content Managing System) and e-Portfolio, where there is a lot of overlap between these two platforms.

### ***Institutional Uses for e-Portfolio***

Program Review  
Rank and Tenure Process  
Department student learning outcomes  
Core Education  
Programmatic Artifact Collection and Showcase

### ***CMS***

Owned by faculty  
Designed around a class  
Specific start and stop term

### ***E-portfolio***

Owned by student  
Multiple purposes (class, major, career, co-curricular)  
Open-ended  
Dynamic

E-portfolio is not designed to be a place to assess the work of the class. Students are asked to demonstrate learning outcomes, as they emerge, develop, and advance. Faculty are assessing the student's reflection of their own work. The Dean commented that we may discover that student learning takes place at a different phase than faculty anticipated. It may be from somewhere else or at a different stage.

Dr. Marcie Patton mentioned that if faculty set learning objectives or goals, design assignments, and ask students to upload into their e-portfolio, students would most likely post the work on which they received outstanding grades. The Dean replied that this is fine. It's up to the students to portray the ways they have met our learning outcomes (which they don't necessarily do equally well on every assignment or in every course).

Dr. Janie Leatherman mentioned that as students engage in their classes over the course of four years, they may be instructed differently about what they are doing with their e-portfolio. Perkus mentioned that it would be helpful to have open conversations as goals are development, so we could be aware of contradiction, redundancy, etc.

### ***Examples of e-portfolios***

- Use in courses—Core-Writing (EN 11 and EN 12) and ENW 290.
- Use in programs—The MFA program uses Digitation as a place to showcase artifacts as exemplars of students. e.g. Craft essays, 3<sup>rd</sup> semester projects. The program also requires that student create a graduation ePortfolio that includes a reflection cover page, their third semester project, and creative thesis.
- Institutional e-Portfolio— A template consistent with the strategic plan, including the learning outcomes from the core pathways, has been created in Digitation.
- Assessment—School Library Media
- Program Review—The e-Portfolio relative to the Philosophy program review is inclusive of self-study, mission and goals, student learning goals and objectives, other program goals and objectives, contribution to Mission and Goals of the College and University.

Perkus mentioned that Digitation is a tool that might be used for assessment; it is a great way to collect and analyze data and designed to handle various types of documents. It is particularly effective in showing student growth over time...a way of documenting what a student has learned as a result of his or her education.

For departmental ePortfolio use, a template can be created specifying programmatic goals/outcomes, which students could select work that best demonstrates these outcomes.

Steffen expressed concern with having multiple sources of learning goals—by faculty, professional institution, pathway projects, IDEA form. Is part of this to give place to rationalize all learning goals that are out there? Perkus mentioned that ePortfolios do not solve the question. It is a tool to use for assessment and a great way to collect and analyze data. It will not solve the many conflicting goals on its own.

The Dean mentioned that all of these outcomes should feed into the goals. Not all courses relate to all outcomes. Some course learning outcomes relate to core outcomes and some to Major/Degree learning outcomes. The core curriculum is the centerpiece of University, and we all want to be attending to that. The Core Pathways should help faculty and students see how multiple disciplines relate by sharing common learning outcomes. The Dean asked chairs to ensure that their faculty understand they are already engage in these inter-relative initiatives through their teaching, ongoing monitoring of their curricula, etc.

### **Dean—Important issues**

- The Dean asked chairs to reminder to ensure that teaching schedules for next year do not interfere with Dean's Council scheduling. Chairs or colleagues who will serve as chair for next year should not schedule classes during Dean's Council meeting times, which is traditionally scheduled on the first Wednesday of the month from 3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.
- There were 126 Merit submissions. The Dean will follow-up with faculty who did not submit a request. The Dean reminded chairs that during the Merit review process departments should engage in formative conversations; this is a departmental responsibility not just the responsibility of the chair. Because the Merit plan does not allow faculty to submit supporting documentation, this could still be reviewed by the department.
- Faculty expressed interest in receiving constructive criticism. The Dean articulated the importance behind communicating transparent instructions and timelines for faculty to follow, especially throughout their Rank and Tenure years. Purely positive remarks do not help individual during R&T time. If there are concerns that affect their tenure, they need to be addressed sooner rather than later.
- Faculty who are tenured and no longer have annual reviews have also communicated to the Dean their great interest in receiving feedback from their colleagues. They want to talk about their work and receive productive advice.
- The Dean mentioned that chairs should inform the Dean of any concerns they may have relative to faculty progress.
- Faculty need to learn of any concerns relative to collegiality. Walker mentioned that sometimes faculty will express concerns and ask that chairs do not share these concerns with the Dean. In these types of situations, the Dean recommended that chairs reflect back to the faculty member the importance of the Dean's role. Collegiality is an important issue and it would be beneficial for faculty to receive feedback from the dean. The goal is to maximum feedback, helping faculty at every benchmark throughout their tenure track years, and beyond. If there is

something highly sensitive and there is not a frank relationship between colleague and department, or between chair and the dean it is going to hurt the colleague. These situations are similar to faculty/student roles and even to parenting roles, where proper mentoring, guidance, and feedback are important to everyone's productivity and professional well being.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 p.m.