College of Arts and Sciences
Dean's Council of Department Chairs
Wednesday, October 5, 2011

Minutes

Attended:
Steve Bayne, Chair of Philosophy
Cecelia Bucki, Chair of History
Mary Ann Carolan, Chair of Modern Languages and Literatures and Director of Italian Studies
Matt Coleman, Chair of Mathematics & Computer Science
David Crawford, Chair of Sociology & Anthropology
Nancy Dallavalle, Chair of Religious Studies
Jean Daniele, Assistant to the Dean of College of Arts & Sciences
Manyul Im, Associate Dean of College of Arts and Sciences
Janie Leatherman, Director of International Studies
Mark LeClair, Chair of Economics
Aaron Perkus, Associate Dean of University College
Lynne Porter, Chair of Visual & Performing Arts
Ronald Salafia, Chair of Psychology
James Simon, Chair of English
Kraig Steffen, Chair of Chemistry & Biochemistry
Brian Walker, Chair of Biology
Maggie Wills, Chair of Communication
Joan Weiss, Associate Dean of College of Arts and Sciences
David Winn, Chair of Physics

Approval of the Minutes
Dr. Mary Ann Carolan moved to approve the September 7, 2011 Dean's Council minutes and
Dr. Marcie Patton seconded the motion. A request to change the title listed for Drs. Brian Walker
and Mary Ann Carolan was communicated. All were in favor of the minutes after these minor
amendments.

The Dean asked if the chairs found the "Take Away" notes useful. Everyone seemed to find them
to be very helpful. Prof. Carolan recommended that these notes be shared with colleagues.
Some did forward to colleagues as well as using them as a point of reference during department
meetings.

The Dean informed chairs that the September 28 meeting notes, relative to their conversation with
the University's lawyers, Edward Walsh and Darrin Callahan, will be shared as a tip sheet at the
December Dean's Council meeting. No minutes were taken at that meeting.

Assessment
The Dean shared the following information relative to Assessment.
- Dr. Aaron Perkus has been working with a lot of the departments through either the
  program review process or individual department assessments.
- Dr. James Simon facilitated a great deal of Assessment work within the English
  Department, inclusive of a substantive summer workshop, where the department achieved
  a lot of progress.

- Dr. Christine Siegel is an Associate Dean of the Graduate School and currently acting as the facilitator for academic assessment through the CAE. Her academic area is psychometrics and assessment of learning. She offers an interesting theoretical perspective on assessment and is a good resource for chairs.
- Department progress reports on assessment were sent to department chairs. These reports offered a snapshot from June 2011 and another snapshot will be shared in June of 2012. The Dean commented that they were generously marked this year with many 2s, because she wanted to acknowledge that chairs and departments are making progress. At this point she is hoping that chairs will move all aspects of assessment into the 2 and 3 range. The idea is not to have it 100% by June 2012 annual reports and the 5th-year NEASC review in fall 2012. Rather, we want to show significant progress and institutionalization of the process so that, by the time NEASC comes back for the College's 10 year reaccreditation review, the departments will have 3s across the board. At that stage this work would be routinely incorporated into the regular annual departmental cycles.
- Dr. Bucki asked where these outcomes are published. The Dean explained that program learning outcomes should be published on faculty syllabi, in all catalog copy including on the University webpage, etc. These are the routine places for publishing information about academic programs, and this should include learning outcomes.

Dr. Aaron Perkus gave an assessment overview, discussing the following points.
- In May 2011 the Dean asked chairs to response to the NEASC areas—talking through outcomes, if they were published, how they were published, and what they looked like. This assessment cycle streamed out into that rubric.
- In reviewing department assessments, Dr. Perkus identified that all departments had learning goals and outcomes, but the majority of the departments had outcomes that were not demonstrable and/or measurable. That is, they did not have active verbs; they were more focused on understanding something as opposed to identifying, analyzing, articulating, etc. He shared a list of verbs that can help faculty think about what they really want students "to know, to do, and to be," along with how they would demonstrate each.
- The following assessment cycle was recommended:
  o Identify goals and student learning outcomes – all department members should be involved in this stage.
  o Design assessment strategies to measure student learning outcomes – all department members should be involved in this stage.
  o Do not engage in assessment of all learning outcomes at once. Identify an assessment project each year, and ensure it involves use of rubrics to examine student learning artifacts. The Dean recommends choosing one core learning outcome and one major learning outcome each year – propotion of focus on core and major would depend on the individual department (e.g., do you teach more core? Then emphasize core learning outcomes).
  o Collect, analyze, and interpret assessment data – this can be done by a committee within the department.
  o Report back to the full department, and work together to determine how you can use assessment results to improve student learning (might be information to inform curricular revision, course redesign, pedagogical changes, different communication about learning goals to students, etc.).
  o Based on the analysis assess the same outcome again after making changes to see if you have improved student learning; or move onto assessing another goal.

- This year NEASC revised their standards, asking for evidence of growth. This means we may need to have entrance and exit measurements to understand what students knew when they entered Fairfield and what they learned along the way.
- NEASC focused on assessment in terms of the core curriculum. The expectation of NEASC is to discuss the core and the major as far as what students are able to demonstrate *as a result of* their Fairfield education.
  - Competence in written and oral communication
  - Scientific and quantitative reasoning skills
  - Critical analysis and logical thinking
  - Capability for continuing learning
- Many of the Core Pathway initiatives match up perfectly with these terms. There are already student learning outcomes that were identified that departments could use, modify/adapt, and/or discuss in terms of having assessment projects related to these initiatives.
- At the level of the academic major, NEASC expects to see clear articulated learning objectives for each degree program. For some departments, this will mean having more than one set of learning outcomes and assessment protocol.
- Note that in Program Review, assessment of student learning is just one aspect (and is ongoing). Program Review is less frequent, much broader, and involves external perspectives.
- A handout was shared, discussing Peggy Maki's Assessing for Learning, which included a table listing helpful targets.
  - Describe what students should represent, demonstrate, or produce.
  - Rely on active verbs.
  - Align with collective intentions translated into the curriculum. and co-curriculum.
  - Map to curriculum, co-curriculum and educational practices.
  - Dr. Perkus expressed the importance of department's faculty collaboratively working together to adopt outcomes, design assessment of outcomes, and discussion on the data generated or the results generated from the data. While the assessment project may only involve a few faculty members, there should be departmental buy-in throughout the process.
  - Assess quantitatively and/or qualitatively – methods should arise from the discipline and also relate to the questions being asked.
- Where to start? A publication from U-Mass called *Program Based Review and Assessment*, offers helpful worksheets, such as the list of active verbs frequently used in objectives and different aspects of courses.
- E-portfolio is a way to measure growth across time. Select artifacts that could be tracked over time. One objective is to have students select artifacts that they feel would demonstrate how they develop their skill over time.
- Dr. Bucki asked if we have a plan to demand students to have e-portfolio? The Dean commented that we have e-portfolio and a product that was selected through faculty review. FYE students are using ePorfolio this year. It is available for use in relationship to department assessment. Dr. Perkus commented that each department has to come up with a way to access their major and one way of doing this is through the e-portfolio product Digication if they want. He recommends departments determine how Digication can help them with their assessment and other program goals.
- In reviewing department assessment reports, he found that most departments received the same comments. They need to:
  - Edit student learning outcomes to ensure they are all measurable.

- o Identify which ones the department will assess.
- o Establish an assessment team and assessment project to assess and score artifacts.
- o Conduct the assessment project.
- o Analyze and share results with the department.
- o Use results to inform pedagogy, enhance curriculum, and guide future assessment work.
- o Work towards departmental assessment at the core and major level to demonstrate evidence of growth. This entails collecting and assessing data at various times during a student's tenure at the University.

- The Dean commented that by the end of the academic year departments should accomplish steps up to the data analysis and sharing results with the department. The summer could be used to take the data and think about next steps, such as developing a workshop to explore changes or other possible improvements together. Departments could apply for a Humanities Institute Grant to come together to look at developing the project to the next level. History, English, LACS, and others have found this format to be very useful.

- Prof. Lynne Porter shared that in the Theatre Program the common learning outcome important for all theatre courses is applied course material. Prof. Porter asked if the department is expected to look at all courses offered. It is difficult because a lot of what VPA engages in is ephemeral. The Dean explained that the process should be to sample artifacts where the department feels students should demonstrate particular learning outcomes. The sample does not necessarily have to be across all courses but rather checking if a certain learning outcome is being achieved (e.g., in a common intro course, somewhere in the intermediate coursework, and in a capstone or senior seminar course). Porter mentioned that they could focus on VPAs applied theatre courses and look at ways they are manifested in the design and acting classes. The Dean commented that if VPA has a capstone course then the artifacts from the capstone course can be focused on for integrative and advanced achievement.

- Dr. Bucki commented that the History Department has been very careful to be student anonymous. How could they track student growth if the decision is not to utilize the e-portfolio product. The Dean mentioned that there are numerous approaches. One is to sample at time 1 and then time 2, but these samples do not have to be from the same students, but rather looking at aggregate scores. Another strategy is if students keep e-portfolios, then at senior year you look at some of these artifacts to see how they track their growth over time. There is a signoff for students to give permission to use their e-portfolios for assessment purposes.

- Dr. Carolan asked for an explanation between e-portfolio and Blackboard. Perkus explained that Blackboard is a course management system that belongs in a class and E-portfolio is something that the student has that follows them through their curriculum; it travels with the student. Digitation is an E-portfolio product.

- Dr. Perkus mentioned that it is important to realize that there is not just one way to engage in departmental assessment. He is available, along with Dr. Christine Siegel, to meet departments for individual program consultations tailored to the specific progress and needs of that department.

- Dr. Perkus mentioned that they have a NEASC report due in May and what they will show them is that the University is on track with assessments. We have to show them that the College is engaged in meaningful and systematic assessment work but it is not necessary to show them actual reports. In his role on the institutional assessment team, Dr. Perkus will want to show that each department has an assessment plan, that there is an understanding

of how to write objectives and conduct a project, that departments are using assessment data for program improvement purposes.

- The Dean commented that there have been three years of broad conversations about assessment, but right now departments are at different places in the process, so specialized conversations are needed to help chairs together with their colleagues. In terms of core vs. major assessment, if a department's primary engagement is core, then it is the department's decision to focus more strongly on their core.
- Dr. Leatherman mentioned that International Studies is not part of the core, so they will focus just on the major.
- Dr. Steffen mentioned that a focus could be on a course with many objectives and outcomes or focus on a serious of related courses with a small number of objectives and outcomes. Dr. Steffen asked which method is likely to be more efficient to get the department moving through the assessment process. Dr. Perkus commented that it may be better to pick a few clear outcomes and follow those through a sequence of courses.
- Dr. Perkus shared a handout identifying useful resources for student learning outcomes—Idea Form, Core Pathways, AACU Value Rubrics, and Mission of the Core.
- Prof. Porter asked if there is any logic in getting like departments to work on assessment plans together. She felt that departments were likely to come up with 4 or 5 of the same outcomes. Perkus recommended she look at the Core Pathways and the Mission of the Core Document (1999), since a lot of collaboration on identifying learning outcomes has already been done. The Dean mentioned that the specific areas within VPA should certainly coordinate. She reminded the group that it is not every *department* that needs to be engaged in assessment, but rather every *degree program*.

Dr. James Simon discussed the English Department case study that members of the department engaged in over the summer of 2011. Faculty participants were Professors Sally O'Driscoll, Elizabeth Petrino, Gita Rajan, Richard Regan, David Sapp, and James Simon participated in an assessment workshop.

Dr. Simon shared the following information/suggestions.
- Use national and regional conferences to gain knowledge: Drs. Simon and Elizabeth Petrino participated in the AAC&U Conference on June 10, 2011, titled *Taking the Lead on Quality:* LEAP and the Degree Qualifications Profile. This was a New England Educational Assessment Network, presented by Carol Geary Schneider, President of the Association of American Colleges and Universities. They were pleased to see that 80% of colleges, universities and community colleges identified intended learning outcomes.
- Advantages in beginning assessment with entry-level course: EN 11
    - Affects all freshmen (approximately 950 students) and 35 professors.
    - Assessment process involves literature and writing professors, full and part-time professors.
    - Each year there will be a different committee.
    - Have broad departmental buy-in on learning goals
    - Support the move to blend tradition of EN11 as writing and EN12 as literature.
    - Start developing a departmental culture of assessment: focus on projects that are do-able and build on early successes.
- Outcomes of Assessment Project:
    - Department is more unified
    - Department completed curriculum review on freshmen sequence and all literature courses.

- - Faculty curiosity to see how well changes are working.
    - Positive buzz about the assessment process.
- English Department assessment efforts over a four-year span (Dr. Simon shared a time table for department assessmet):
    - Year One (2011-2012) —Focus on EN 11 and EN 12.
    - Year Two (2012-2013)—Focus on 100-level Literature
    - Year Three (2013-2014)—Focus on Writing concentrations.
    - Year Four (2014-2015)—Focus on Lit/Cultural Studies concentration and overall English major outcomes

The following comments were addressed.
- Dr. Carolan liked the idea of having a timetable. It offers an opportunity for a new chair to be able to ensure continue assessment plan.
- Dr. Crawford was curious how the chair received buy-in from 35 professors. Simon commented that 24 of these professors are adjunct faculty and if they do not comply with department curricular redesign (based on new learning outcomes, etc.), and participate in assessment, their contract will not be renewed.
- The Dean commented that it was probably easier to get faculty to put learning outcomes on syllabus, but getting them to teach what is on their syllabus may be more of a challenge. Students are not the only ones learning from the assessment process; faculty members are learning how to teach their subject more effectively so that students actually learn what we want/hope they learn.
- Dr. Patton asked if part-time faculty are on assessment committees. Dr. Simon noted that in English it is important to have part-time faculty participate. The Dean noted assessment is the responsibility of our tenure track faculty, but she is happy to see part-timers participate when it makes sense, and she will provide a small stipend for part-time colleagues who attend departmental workshops on assessment. Dr. Im commented that CAE also offers funding to train part-timers who participate in peer review of teaching. The idea is for all faculty, full- and part-time, to become informed participants.

- Dr. Simon discussed a three-step cycle focusing on EN 11.
    - *Step 1: Take goals and turn them into measurable student learning outcomes.* They choose objectives from the IDEA form.
        - Objective 1: Developing skill in expressing oneself orally or in writing.
            - ✓ EN 11 Course Goal: Demonstrate ability to write effectively.
            - ✓ Student Learning Outcome: To produce a thesis-driven document that has a clear sense of audience and purpose.
        - Objective 2: Learning to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view.
            - ✓ EN 11 Course Goal: Student will be able to demonstrate competence engaging with a secondary source.
            - ✓ Student Learning Outcome: Demonstrate ability to read, summarize, analyze, and critique secondary source.

Dr. Carolan asked if it was decided within the department that everyone in EN 11 would be looking at the same learning outcome in EN11. Simon commented that the department felt it was important to assess students based on the same learning outcome. Dr. Perkus commented that outcomes should be published to students, appearing on syllabi and department websites, so that objectives are clearly communicated to students. Faculty should remind students of the main

course and program learning objectives before students fill out course evaluations so they focus on the goals of the particular course. The Dean mentioned that this would communicate to students that the professor is responsible for these learning outcomes and this should be the basis on which they are evaluating the course. Some of the widespread faculty complaints about the old course evaluation forms is that they did not measure what they stated they were measuring.

- o *Step 2: Gather information on how well we are meeting student learning outcomes.*
    - Informed all professors in EN 11, before they created their syllabus to choose a writing assignment that grows out of their course to be completed during the final five weeks of the course, so they could see the impact of the course.
    - This should be worth at least 10% of the final grade and be at least 750 words and include at least one in-text reference, documented in MLA style
    - Paper should have been subject to at least one revision
    - Create a drop box approach—the professor will tell students what assignment to drop into the box. There would be approximately 100 student papers that would be sampled, having two people reading each paper. With seven people on the committee each member would be reading 30 papers. The Dean felt that this was a lot of papers to read. It would be more reasonable for each member to read 10 – 15 papers. She also mentioned that a subset of the artifacts could be the focus, for example the beginning and concluding paragraphs.
    - A rubric to assess EN11 papers was developed.

Prof. Porter asked how this system proved learning. Simon mentioned that a pre-test, post-test may be more effective. Perkus agreed that this method does not necessarily assess growth due to learning in the course. Year 1, the first core course, is where students begin at the start of their academic career and then we will assess again in their 300 level courses, and would be able to compare time A (EN 11) and time B (EN 3xx). Dr. Perkus mentioned that when NEASC assesses learning, they are talking about learning at the institutional level not necessarily the course level (which is what faculty assess through grading in each individual course).

- o *Step 3: Consider changes and feed them back into the course/program being assessed.*
    - Fall 2011: EN 11 assessment committee meets after classes end, they norm the grading, and they evaluate papers based on rubric. Initial report developed.
    - EN12 assessment committee is created and considers EN11 report. Members will make assessment plans for EN12 early, so that professors can include any details on spring 2012 syllabus.

The Dean thanked Drs. Perkus and Simon for their presentations and reminded chairs that both are available for follow-up questions, advice, and consultation. Chairs should invite Drs. Perkus and/or Siegel to an upcoming meeting to help the department move from wherever they are now to the next steps.

Budgets
- FY '12 budget issues were discussed at the open budget forums. It was communicated that the University is faced with a 4.3 million dollar deficit, having to do with the number of students we obtained and the amount of financial aid it took to get them. The graduate school enrollments are a little soft this year, but not too far below projections in the

College. The Vice Presidents are looking at closing this gap through all kinds of measures some of them will likely involve layoffs at the University but probably not in the academic division. Some open positions may not be filled. Any budget reduction measures concerning faculty salary or benefits will go through the Faculty Salary Committee and folks should share their thoughts with those representatives. The Dean articulated that chairs should be ready for possible cutbacks in operating budgets and to be frugal with their spending this year.

- FY '13 Budget Planning Preview—The Dean asked that chairs look at cost saving mechanisms. The sciences are looking at per student per lab costs, so that we could literally communicate what it cost in materials per student. Part of the reason for doing calculations is to support a rationale for keeping the funds that we have. The Dean encouraged chairs to try to go paperless within their department, because a large part of budgets are spent on photocopying. We are still waiting to obtain information from the SVPAA's office in terms of instructions for FY '13 budget requests. The Dean encouraged chairs to request what they minimally need and then to use only what the department is allocated, especially in terms of budget allocations for adjuncts, overloads, student workers, and stipends. It is important to include all requests for personnel needs, with the exception of current full-time positions. This is inclusive of adjunct needs for the entire academic year, overloads, non-work study students, graduate assistants, and other stipends.

  Dr. Bucki asked how chairs should account for UC courses. The Dean communicated that these requests currently come through the University College budget process and is not sure how this will happen next year. The first goal is to try to cross list as many courses as possible and proportionately share the cost for the course between CAS and UC. This also ensures full enrollments in courses.

  The Dean met with Mark Reed, who now has both legal affairs and Human Resources under his leadership. The Dean shared feedback with VP Reed in terms of interaction, particular regarding faculty searches, staff performance review procedures, and keeping staff knowledgeable with new technology and policy changes. VP Reed will engage in an assessment of Human Resources, beginning with what we expect Human Resources to do for the University.

Academic Policy Issues
Dr. Im discussed the following issues relative to policy changes in the College and asked for Chairs to forward him their questions, comments, and suggestions.

- **Overview of Problem:** Compliance between the Catalog description of the University Course Numbering system for undergraduate courses and the actual numbering patterns in the College's undergraduate courses is inconsistent, sometimes systemically, due to a variety of rationales and practices among departments and programs.

- **Suggested Fix:** The Catalog description should be changed to fit current practice in the most descriptively accurate way. This will entail a change to the Journal of Record taking a policy from UCC to Academic Council.

  Current Catalog categories for undergraduate courses:

    01-99 Introductory courses

100-199 Intermediate courses without prerequisites
200-299 Intermediate courses with prerequisites
300-399 Advanced courses, normally limited to juniors and seniors, and open
        to graduate students with permission

- **Breakdown of compliance problems by type:**
  1. Widespread variation in use or application of the term "introductory" – examples:
     o Introductory for non-majors
     o Introductory for majors
     o Introductory surveys
     o Introductory elemental courses
  2. Explicitly non-compliant catalog descriptions/curricular schemes – examples:
     o Systematic non-compliance for sequential courses (some 10 or 100 level course is
        prerequisite to a second-in-sequence 100 level course
     o 100 level courses that are explicitly designed and described as introductory
        rather than intermediate

- **Not necessarily compliance issues, but possibly odd outgrowths of unclarity about the term "introductory":**
  1. Complete lack of 10 level courses in some programs – e.g. Psychology
     o Are no Psychology courses introductory level?

  2. Complete lack of 100 level courses in some programs – e.g. Chemistry, History, and Physics
     o Not sure this is problematic under the current catalog description; but it seems odd
        from a student perspective

- **Dr. Im suggested the following revised Catalog categories for undergraduate courses:**
  01-199 Introductory to intermediate courses
  200-299 Advanced intermediate courses
  300-399 Advanced courses, normally limited to juniors and seniors, and open
          to graduate students with permission

Please send Dr. Im comments about this suggestion. He is soliciting chair perspectives *before* taking this issue to UCC for broader consideration and wants to include chair/department perspectives.

Meeting adjourned at 5:05 pm