University Assessment Council
April 1, 2010, 10:00 a.m.

Minutes

Members Present: Drew Clark (Chair), Donna Angarano, George Crandell, Susan Hubbard, Leonard Lock, Nels Madsen, Sharon McDonough, Sharon Oswald, Paul Patterson, Karen Rogers, Jennifer Schuessler, Tin Yau Tam, and Iryna Johnson.

Guests Present: Juliet Rumble and David Adams

The meeting started with a progress report on the submission of assessment reports for 2008-09. At the moment 43 programs have submitted their reports, and 124 reports are either submitted or “in progress.” Drew Clark suggested three targets for the meeting:

- Discussion of technical problems encountered in submitting assessment reports
- Next steps in the reporting and review process and possible ways to provide feedback to programs
- Review of a draft announcement for small assessment grants

The discussion started with the technical problems some faculty members have encountered while completing and submitting reports. A few department heads did not have access because of changes in department names that created mismatches with HR records. OIRA will work on avoiding such problems in the future by making manual changes in some HR data fields. Sharon McDonough mentioned that one department head in the School of Pharmacy had log-in repeatedly while completing the report from an off-campus location. While these technical problems with AU Assessment appear limited, Drew indicated that OIRA remains open to the possibility of licensing a commercial product such as TrackDat or WEAVE Online. At present, however, cost considerations argue against the option of purchasing an expensive data management system. Lenny Lock mentioned that College of Education will have meetings with two prospective data management vendors——r-grade and TK-20——next week at Auburn University. Sharon McDonough noted that Pharmacy is using E*Value. The College of Veterinary Medicine and the School of Nursing are also exploring the possibility of using E*Value. Sharon agreed that she could demonstrate E*Value for the University Assessment Council if there was sufficient interest.

The UAC next reviewed three examples of forms used at other institutions to provide feedback to programs on their assessment reports. It was agreed that there was no a compelling reason to have a uniform feedback form for all colleges. At the same time, faculty members should know that the reports have been read and reviewed. It will be also expected that, after reports are reviewed, the Deans’ offices will send emails to the OIRA indicating that the reports are final.

Because they do not have department-level reports, Pharmacy, Vet Med and Nursing would like to review each other’s reports. OIRA will arrange the reviewing cycle. College-level committees (such committees exist in the College of Liberal Arts and the College of Education) will not be involved in reviews of assessment reports at this point. Such reviews will be made primarily by the members of the University Assessment Council.

Nels Madsen commented that, among the three sample feedback forms, he prefers the one from SUNY Binghamton, because it emphasizes improvement and does not look as additional reporting to
complete. Drew suggested that, if someone creates their own feedback formats, they should share it with the UAC.

The final item discussed was a draft announcement, presented by Drew Clark, of small assessment grants for 2010-11. One of the things that Barbara Walvoord recommended was to fund assessment grants. Applications will be reviewed by the University Assessment Council each semester. To begin with, grants will be funded by approximately $15,000 in one-time funds available to OIRA.

Drew Clark proposed spending the first grant dollars to send two or three Auburn faculty members to a Performance Task Academy in Summer 2010. These academies are associated with the CLA in the Classroom project, sponsored by the Council for Aid to Education. Auburn has been involved in the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) project. It has been a high profile projects that draws a lot of attention during the Board meetings. It is also an abstract project that can be used at the institutional level, but cannot be disaggregated to a, for example, college or classroom level. The “CLA in the classroom” project teaches faculty members or faculty teams to design and score CLA-like tests for use in their own classrooms and programs. OIRA would like to allocate some of the funds from Assessment grants to the travel of 2-3 Auburn faculty members to the Academy. The Biggio Center will also cover 2 faculty members’ travel expenses. Members of the University Assessment Council will send names of the faculty members who might be interested in such training.

Because several members of the UAC had mentioned interesting assessment practices in their schools and colleges, Nels Madsen suggested devoting part of each future UAC meeting to brief presentations about what’s going on with respect to assessment in the schools and colleges. Karen Rogers added that these presentations could also focus on sharing problems encountered and seeking advice from peers on the UAC. Success stories should also be shared so that other colleges could replicate them.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:20 a.m.