

**Western Connecticut State University**  
**General Education Committee**  
**2008-2009**

**Members:** Daryle Brown (PS), Ron Drozdenko (Ansell), Robin Flanagan (At-Large, Chair), Veronica Kenausis (Library, Webmaster), Patty O'Neill (First Year Coordinator), Chuck Rocca (A&S), Alba Skar(A&S), Linda Vaden-Goad (Dean), Kerry Walker (VPA), Alan Anderson (CUCAS rep), Matt Buchta (SGA rep)

**Meeting Time:** First Friday of the month at **8:30 am**. September 5, 2008, October 3, 2008, November 14 (rescheduled), 2008, December 5, 2008, February 6, 2009, **March 13 (an exception), 2009**, April 3, 2009, May 1, 2009.

**Meeting Place:** Haas Library 2<sup>nd</sup> floor conference room

**Agenda**

**Friday, March 13**

**Recording: Walker**

- I. Minutes of February meeting (Skar)
- II. Input from community (15 minutes)
- III. Old business
  - a) Update on FYE (O'Neill)
  - b) Update on assessment of General Education curriculum (Flanagan)
  - c) The Writing Requirement (Flanagan)
- IV. New business
  - a) WLL SPA 226 Global Immersion: Spain for Gen Ed (Bakhtarova)
- V. Adjourn (by 10:00)

## Minutes

Friday, February 6, 2009

Western Connecticut State University

General Education Committee

2008-2009

Attendance: Veronica Kenausis, Daryle Brown, Matt Buchta, Alba Skar, Robin Flanagan, Patty O'Neill, Kerry Walker, Linda Vaden-Goad, Charles Rocca, Lourdes Cruz (Guest).

I. Minutes of December 5 Meeting (Motion to Approve: Rocca/Brown): Approved with 2 abstentions after correction of spelling of guest name "Whittemore".

II. Input from community (none)

III. Old business

a) Update on FYE (O'Neill)

- i) Report from Patty O'Neill: There are currently 7 confirmed FY sections. There is some flexibility in the FY program to recruit faculty and department participation. FY courses can include non-FY students on a course by course basis. Some departments and faculty have requested this due to a small number of sections offered in some departments or a desire to have upperclassmen in courses. Also, some adjuncts are currently teaching FY courses. However, FY is supposed to ideally be staffed with full-time faculty members.
- ii) Problems with recruiting: 1) It is difficult to recruit faculty from departments with small class sizes. 2) Faculty are concerned about the loss of content with added FY expectations.
- iii) Benefits of FYE: 1) The retention rate was 10% higher for students in FY courses vs. those not enrolled in FY courses. 2) There was a positive relationship between FY enrollment and higher GPA.
- iv) Suggestion: There could be small grants for faculty to teach FY courses. It would be an additional incentive that could be similar to the summer curriculum grants. If we can translate 10% greater retention into \$, we could use some of the funding for the reward structure for faculty. However, there are difficulties with compensation to faculty if the FYE is tied to the adjunct budget.
- v) Suggestion: It could be possible to create an FY council for faculty to participate in a "service" category. This may respond to the issue of "reward" for P&T consideration. As it stands now, service to the FY program is not highly recognized, and evaluations of faculty may be lower in FY courses, which could discourage participation by junior faculty.

*b) Update on assessment of General Education curriculum (Flanagan)*

*Robin Flanagan reported that this is not working and suggested that we move directly to our planning with the model from Oklahoma.*

*c) The Writing Requirement (Kenausis)*

*Veronica Kenausis recommended we table this for March in order to allow her to meet first with Patrick Ryan and discuss interest in the Writing Department.*

*IV. New business*

*a) Next step in assessment (Flanagan)*

*Robin Flanagan recommended that we move forward with our assessment of the Writing (W) requirement. All agreed.*

*Suggestions:*

- i) A summer group would assess a random sample of student work taken before any grading by the professor. All identifying information would be removed.*
- ii) Writing samples would be from fall and spring but not assessed until summer.*
- iii) The summer assessment group would be paid for their work.*
- iv) Oklahoma had gophers to obtain samples from faculty and an office.*
- v) Veronica Kenausis proposed a pilot of 2-3 classes this year to plan for next year. There was general agreement to begin assessment in 09-10.*
- vi) Linda Vaden-Goad suggested we create a budget for the resources necessary for this.*
- vii) Oklahoma gave faculty \$1,000 per 70 papers corrected. There could be compensation offered in summer, such as 1 credit per faculty member for a certain number of days to meet as a group, or a certain number of assessments completed.*
- viii) Writing Samples: The assessment should include writing samples at the beginning of undergraduate studies and after completion of the writing intensive requirement.*
- ix) Suggestions for assessment of Beginning Writing Samples:
  - a. We could use the Placement Exam score as an indicator from Banner.*
  - b. We could consider the SAT essay.*
  - c. We could request artifacts.*
  - d. What rubric would be appropriate?**
- x) Suggestions for assessment of Post-Requirement Writing Samples:
  - a. 3 readers per paper should come to a consensus on the score.*
  - b. There should be 50 papers rather than 70 for WCSU since we are a smaller school than Oklahoma.**

*V. Motion to adjourn at 10:30 (Rocca/O'Neill)*

**MAPP**  
**Measures of Academic Proficiency and Progress**

**Summary of Scaled Scores**  
**To show the ability of the group taking the test**

**WCSU** Cohort Name: Fall 2008 FY & 100-Level Courses

**Abbreviated** Close Date: 1/12/2009 (Processed)

**Test Description:** Abbreviated Student Level: All  
 Form B Paper

**Number of students tested:** 145

**Number of students included in these statistics:** 141

**Number of students excluded (see roster):** 4

*National Percentile is based on 2003-07 entering freshmen at comprehensive colleges and universities*

	Possible Range	WCSU Mean	National MEAN	<b>National Percentile</b>	95% Confidence Limits* for Mean	Standard Deviation	25th Percentile	75th Percentile
<b>Total Score</b>	400 to 500	435.4	437.9	<b>36</b>	432 to 439	16.4	421	447
<b>Skills Subscores:</b>								
<b>Critical Thinking</b>	100 to 130	109.1	109.3	<i>47</i>	108 to 110	5.3	105	112
<b>Reading</b>	100 to 130	114.9	116.1	<i>22</i>	113 to 116	6.6	110	120
<b>Writing</b>	100 to 130	113.3	113.2	<i>42</i>	112 to 115	5.0	110	116
<b>Mathematics</b>	100 to 130	110.9	112.3	<i>11</i>	110 to 112	4.8	107	113
<b>Context-Based Subscores:</b>								
<b>Humanities</b>	100 to 130	111.7	113.0	<i>11</i>	110 to 113	6.0	107	115
<b>Social Sciences</b>	100 to 130	110.8	111.7	<i>18</i>	109 to 112	5.4	106	114
<b>Natural Sciences</b>	100 to 130	113.4	113.3	<i>44</i>	112 to 115	5.2	109	116

\*The confidence limits are based on the assumption that the questions contributing to each scaled score are a sample from a much larger set of possible questions that could have been used to measure those same skills. If the group of students taking the test is a sample from some larger population of students eligible to be tested, the confidence limits include both sampling of students and sampling of questions as factors that could cause the mean score to vary. The confidence limits indicate the precision of the mean score of the students actually tested, as an estimate of the "true population mean" - the mean score that would result if all the students in the population could somehow be tested with all possible questions. These confidence limits were computed by a procedure that has a 95 percent probability of producing upper and lower limits that will surround the true population mean. The population size used in the calculation of the confidence limits for the mean scores in this report is 999999.

## **Update on Writing Requirement**

*Briefly, Dr. Ryan believes that the only way to increase the writing intensive requirement (at least in the short term) is for the committee to recommend a second writing intensive course requirement in the major only. We calculated the number of sections that would be required to offer a second W course within the general education curriculum (approx. 51) and he is not at all confident that we would be able to achieve that number. He believes that many upper level courses in the majors already require a significant amount of “academic writing”, and could be easily designated as writing intensive.*

*We also briefly discussed the concept writing across the curriculum (with which he has some experience) and how we may be able to encourage a more interdisciplinary approach to writing. He referred the “writing to learn/learning to write” national standard movement as something we may be able to pursue long term.*

- Veronica Kenausis, by email, 3/10/09

## EXAMPLE ASSESSMENT PLAN

(A) **General Education, Oklahoma State University**

**Plan for Assessment of General Education Student Learning Outcomes**

(B) **Pam Bowers, Assessment Coordinator**

**September 7, 2005**

### (C) MISSION STATEMENT

General education courses at Oklahoma State University provide students with general knowledge, skills, and attitudes conducive to lifelong learning in a complex society. Specifically, general education at Oklahoma State University is intended to:

- Construct a broad foundation for the student's specialized course of study,
- Develop the student's ability to read, observe, and listen with comprehension,
- Enhance the student's skills in communicating effectively,
- Expand the student's capacity for critical analysis and problem solving,
- Assist the student in understanding and respecting diversity in people, beliefs, and societies, and
- Develop the student's ability to appreciate and function in the human and natural environment.

### (D) STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Graduates will be able to communicate effectively in writing.
2. Graduates will know and be able to apply mathematical concepts.
3. Graduates will know and be able to apply scientific principles.
4. Graduates will be able to critically analyze and solve problems.

### (E) ASSESSMENT METHODS (described separately for each outcome)

1. **Graduates will be able to communicate effectively in writing.**

**Method 1A.** Random samples of students writing will be collected from selected assignments in courses throughout the curriculum. Written communication skills will be evaluated by a team of faculty members identified by the General Education Assessment Committee. The evaluation will be based on a rubric (attached) developed by the General Education Assessment Committee. Faculty members will be trained in the use of the rubric prior to the evaluation. Each faculty member will rate each sample individually, then meet with the group to reach a consensus score for each sample. Writing samples will have identifying information removed before faculty review. This process is transparent to students, and requires minimal time of faculty (for sample collection).

- (F) **TIMELINE 1A:** Samples will be collected during the Fall and Spring semesters; assessment will be conducted during the summer.

**Method 1B.** A random sample of first-year and senior OSU students will participate in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). NSSE provides students' self-reports of their level of engagement in class activities that contribute to developing effective written communication skills.

**Timeline 1B:** OSU participates in the NSSE survey every third year (2002, 2005, 2008).

2. **Graduates will know and be able to apply mathematical concepts.**

**Method 2A.** Random samples of students writing will be collected from selected assignments in courses throughout the curriculum. Mathematics skills will be evaluated by a team of faculty members identified by the General Education Assessment Committee. The evaluation will be based on a rubric (attached) developed by the General Education Assessment Committee. Faculty members will be trained in the use of the rubric prior to the evaluation. Each faculty member will rate each sample individually, then meet with the group to reach a consensus score for each sample. Samples will have identifying information removed before faculty review. This process is transparent to students, and requires minimal time of faculty (for sample collection).

**Timeline 2A:** Samples will be collected during the Fall and Spring semesters; assessment will be conducted during the summer.

**Method 2B.** A random sample of first-year and senior OSU students will participate in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). NSSE provides students self-reports of their level of engagement in class activities that contribute to developing effective mathematics skills.

**Timeline 2B:** OSU participates in the NSSE survey every third year (2002, 2005, 2008).

3. **Graduates will know and be able to apply scientific principles.**

**Method 3A.** Random samples of students writing will be collected from selected assignments in courses throughout the curriculum. Science problem-solving skills will be evaluated by a team of faculty members identified by the General Education Assessment Committee. The evaluation will be based on a rubric (attached) developed by the General Education Assessment Committee. Faculty members will be trained in the use of the rubric prior to the evaluation. Each faculty member will rate each sample individually, then meet with the group to reach a consensus score for each sample. Samples will have identifying information removed before faculty review. This process is transparent to students, and requires minimal time of faculty (for sample collection).

**Timeline 3A:** Samples will be collected during the Fall and Spring semesters; assessment will be conducted during the summer.

**Method 3B.** A random sample of first-year and senior OSU students will participate in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). NSSE provides students self-reports of their level of engagement in class activities that contribute to developing effective science problem-solving skills.

**Timeline 3B:** OSU participates in the NSSE survey every third year (2002, 2005, 2008).

4. **Graduates will be able to critically analyze and solve problems.**

**Method 4A.** Random samples of students writing will be collected from selected assignments in courses throughout the curriculum. Critical thinking skills will be evaluated by a team of faculty members identified by the General Education Assessment Committee. The evaluation will be based on a rubric (attached) developed by the General Education Assessment Committee. Faculty members will

be trained in the use of the rubric prior to the evaluation. Each faculty member will rate each sample individually, then meet with the group to reach a consensus score for each sample. Samples will have identifying information removed before faculty review. This process is transparent to students, and requires minimal time of faculty (for sample collection).

**Timeline 4A:** Samples will be collected during the Fall and Spring semesters; assessment will be conducted during the summer.

**Method 4B.** A random sample of first-year and senior OSU students will participate in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). NSSE provides students self-reports of their level of engagement in class activities that contribute to developing effective critical thinking skills.

**Timeline 4B:** OSU participates in the NSSE survey every third year (2002, 2005, 2008).

## **(G) USING RESULTS TO IMPROVE THE PROGRAM**

Results of assessments of these four learning outcomes will be presented by the General Education Assessment Committee to the General Education Advisory Council (GEAC), the policy making body for general education at OSU. These results will also be presented to the Assessment Council, who may provide recommendations to GEAC.

During regularly scheduled monthly meetings, GEAC will consider these results and identify any actions needed to improve the general education curriculum and increase students' achievement of the expected learning outcomes.



## Views

### Who Really Pays for Assessment?

March 2, 2009

By [Unfunded Mandate](#)

*Nothin' from nothin' leaves nothin'  
You gotta have somethin'  
If you wanna be with me.  
--Billy Preston and Bruce Fisher*

Many essays in these pages have debated the pros and cons of assessment, but I have not yet seen a discussion about what from my perspective is a crucial question for anyone involved in the assessment process: Who pays?

For the purpose of this essay I want to bracket the question of the value of assessment. In fact I want to imagine, as proponents of assessment claim, that the kinds of assessment now being required or proposed are distinct from the kinds of assessment academic departments have traditionally performed, and that these new kinds of assessment improve instruction.

But if these assessments add value, who creates that value? There is no such thing as a free lunch. And it is faculty who are very often being asked to cook up this assessment meal. The new work is not trivial. Of course, faculty members carry out assessment as part of their regular employment. This ordinary assessment includes evaluating student assignments, both individually and at the end of a course, and broader evaluation of the direction and effectiveness of academic programs.

Recent calls for assessment add new layers to this traditional work of the faculty. Indeed, there may be more than one externally imposed, large-scale assessment requirement. State education boards may have their version of assessment requirements, and regional accrediting agencies another. Because these requirements do not necessarily coordinate either with one another or with the kinds of assessment in which faculty have traditionally been engaged, members of the faculty can find themselves involved in multiple assessment projects at once, each with its own distinct requirements. There are additional labor costs involved in learning the frequently complex number of assessment cycles and report formats required, even before one does the actual work of a new assessment.

All told, I would estimate that I spent about 50 total working hours last year on additional required assessments: these hours include tasks such as learning about multiple assessment formats and assessment software, meeting with assessment staff to discuss requirements, collecting information, drafting multiple reports and coordinating sections of these reports with colleagues. This 50 hours of time was just mine. To estimate the total cost to my department, you would need to multiply that number by 4 (the number of faculty members for whom this assessment was a principal duty), and then a fraction of that number -- say an average of 8 -- by another 15 faculty who helped in various ways with the assessment. The total hours come to 320. That's a lot of work, and hence a lot of work not being done somewhere else. Only a fraction of that work could be folded into the traditional forms of assessment done by faculty.

At my institution, moreover, there is little administrative support for these new assessment requirements. Our small assessment office works valiantly to keep up with its own ever-increasing workload, but because of the strains on that office there is little the staff can do for departments other than communicate information about assessment requirements and leave departments to figure out how to meet them.

Some proponents of assessment argue that the work should be understood as part of a faculty member's job description. As noted above, I agree that assessment of students and programs is part of a tenure-line faculty member's responsibility -- of teaching and service, to be exact. (I strenuously disagree, however, that already underpaid part-time faculty should be required to engage in these additional forms of assessments, as they sometimes are.) But you can't have your cake and eat it. If there is something new, and hence value-added, in the current calls for assessment, beyond the forms of assessment that members of the faculty have traditionally performed, then there must also be new work involved -- work that had not previously been part of the responsibilities of tenure-line faculty.

There are a few ways to understand how this new work gets added on. First, one could justify this addition by claiming that tenure-line faculty have been under employed. Those who believe that to be the case should state it explicitly, and provide good evidence to back up their claim.

Second, one could grant, as I believe is the case, that faculty already have full loads comprised of teaching, research and service. In that case, institutions could take seriously the idea of new assessment requirements by shifting faculty work obligations. What percentage of the faculty member's job should be devoted to new assessment requirements? Perhaps, for example, universities should lower research expectations in order to allow faculty time to carry out new layers of assessment, or perhaps members of the faculty should receive some form of course release.

Because universities are, very reasonably, unwilling to cut back on any of the current obligations of their tenure-line faculty, I suspect they turn (as at my institution) to the tempting strategy of piggy-backing. In this strategy it is hoped that since members of the faculty have always assessed instruction, they can just add the new assessment requirements to the mix. In my experience, however, this strategy is less piggy-backing than camel's back-breaking. Especially troubling is that the faculty charged with new forms of assessment are often those who were already most involved with forms of assessment traditional to the department or college.

For example, our undergraduate committee was delayed by a semester in carrying out planned improvements to the undergraduate program because our time was spent assessing and reporting according to the requirements of a new state-mandated assessment. At the minimum, advocates of new assessment requirements must be willing to state that they are comfortable asking faculty that have long-standing modes of self-assessment to give up (rather than double-up) these forms of self-assessment, in order to create time to comply with the new requirements.

There is one more approach, the worst of all. That's just not to care. This approach says (more or less tacitly) "if the faculty have more work to do, so what? Things are tough all over." This approach is not only unfair, but also counterproductive. The work gets done, but it gets done poorly. If one considers declines in service in businesses that are trying to do more with less (for example, the airlines) it is easy to see how disastrous an approach this is. Overburdening faculty, in fact, most adversely impacts the very constituency that assessment is supposed to help: the students.

So here is my proposal. From now on, all plans for assessment should come with plans for who is going to do the labor, where the labor time is going to come from, and, if need be, who will pay for it. This side of any assessment plan should be as detailed as the requirements for assessing itself, including an estimate of the added number of hours required for the assessment, as the IRS estimates the time to do our taxes. I would add that if there are readers who think I must be overestimating the amount of time my department spent on additional assessment requirements, at least I am providing an estimate (I wish, in this case, I had treated my hours as billable!). It would be helpful to see from assessment proponents how much time -- additional to the ordinary teaching and service responsibilities of faculty -- they believe the assessments should take, and, again, where that time should come from.

I have to hope that those who believe the most in the value of new assessment requirements would be the most enthusiastic about accounting for the monetary or staffing resources required to carry them out. After all, to the principles that there's no such thing as a free lunch, and that you can't have your cake and eat it, we may add that you get what you pay for. If we're going to take new assessment requirements seriously, let's not nickel and dime them. And if we're not going to nickel and dime them, then we need serious and explicit discussions about who pays.

Unfunded Mandate is the pseudonym of a member of the faculty at a large state university.