



Cal Poly WASC Steering Committee

April 27, 2009
2:00 - 4:00 p.m.
35-510B

In Attendance:

Peggy Browneller Paradis, Cassie Carter, David Conn, Susan Elrod, Bruno Giberti, Anna Gold, Brent Goodman, Rachel Henry, Tom Mackin, Cheryl Ney, Skip Parks, Erling Smith, Susan Sparling, Scott Steinmaus, Tom Trice, Debra Valencia-Laver

Absent:

Denise Campbell, Mohammad Noori, Rick Ramirez, Craig Schultz, Dan Villegas, Kelley Wigton, Linda Halisky, Doug Keeseey, Angela Kramer, Mary Whiteford

Minutes

There were no objections to the minutes.

WASC Academic Resource Conference Reports

- David, Bruno, Cheryl, Scott, Susan, Tom Trice, Doug, and Rachel attended the conference.

Assessment

- Ralph Wolff, WASC President, emphasized that the focus on assessment of student learning will increase and the push for accountability may increase. Many of the attendees said the importance of assessment was stressed in the presentations they heard. 33% of sessions focused on assessment.
- All ongoing assessment is part of the WASC process because WASC is evaluating our assessment processes.
- One workshop highlighted encouraging faculty to embrace assessment. This institution had faculty representatives begin a departmental discussion about what faculty wanted their graduates to be able to do. Over the course of the year they developed learning outcomes and rubrics.
- Programs will have to decide whether they want pedagogically significant assessment or statistically significant assessment, such as is offered by the ETS MAP test. It is possible to use them in tandem.
- It's time to use assessment data to start improving student learning and closing the loop.
- It's important to involve as much of the campus as possible in assessment and to have a common method of assessment.
- It's useful to have an assessment database that is both easy to contribute information to and easy to retrieve information from.
- Holistic rubrics were more helpful than analytic rubrics for one campus.
- While assessment at Cal Poly isn't perfect, it is in pretty good shape, and we're making progress in some areas.

Learning Objectives

- UC Merced gave a useful session on how to design syllabi around student learning objectives and how the syllabi can be used. Department chair and associate dean buy-in was critical for the process. They developed rubrics to review the syllabi.
- Another session presented mission-centered learning objectives, which had taken a long time to develop but seemed to be effective.

TSM

- TSM needs to be more tied into student learning.
- Cal Poly Pomona was docked on their self-study for having no consistent definition of TSM during their CPR visit. This may have been because they claimed to have a definition, whereas we acknowledge that the discussion is ongoing. Many of the comments on the first draft of our Strategic Plan addressed a lack of definitions for certain terms. Erling is now compiling a glossary. The following terms remain undefined: global perspective, learn-by-doing, polytechnic identity, new liberal education, student success, teacher-scholar model.
- Department chairs at Cal Poly appreciated having the Boyer definitions given to them in our TSM survey, and most faculty members can find themselves in one of the four areas.
- The TSM working group is still investigating to what degree undergraduate research is part of the TSM here.

Other

- David distributed “Key Issues for the Future – A WASC Discussion Paper.”
- A session on e-portfolios stressed that they are more than a repository—it includes facilitated reflection. Rubric development needs to become part of our daily activities.
- Another session pointed out that the timing of surveys affects students’ responses depending on where they are in certain processes and whether they’ve had time to reflect on what they’ve learned.
- A session on graduate programs served as a reminder that we haven’t discussed much how graduate programs fit into Cal Poly’s self-study.
- Institutions are taking a variety of approaches to academic program review.
- It’s important to begin work on the EER during the CPR.
- The visiting team works very hard during the site visit, so it’s important to treat them well and make their job easy.
- The conference was a good team-building experience.

Faculty/Staff Survey

In the following discussions, the Steering Committee acted as a focus group for two questions in final development for the faculty/staff survey.

Student Learning Question

- What do you think this question is asking for: “In working with students, which of the following skills do you stress in their development?” Replies:
 - How do I engage students in the classroom?
 - “In their development” meant the whole experience, including undergraduate research.

- How often do I engage students in these things? I rarely ask them about ethics in the classroom, but in research I do. So I included all experiences. It will vary depending on how faculty and staff members engage with students.
- It's unclear what this question is measuring. In some ways it's a measure of how much I do this. In other ways it measures how much I value this.
- Development of student skills or students as entire human beings?
- It seems like the "right answer" is to put always for all of them.
- Rephrase it to say, "Do students get an opportunity in your work environment to develop these skills?" But this wording takes the responsibility away from the faculty/staff member, whereas the intent is that s/he be responsible in this area.
- Does this question link to other data? That would affect the wording.
- This question is not on the student survey but has a relationship to a similar question on the student survey.
- One possibility is to ask "How do you feel your colleagues do..." which may prevent people from feeling pressured to say always.
- It would be more effective to ask "how often."
- How often makes more sense because faculty may value an area that is not part of their coursework.
- The question needs something after development—development as what? Human beings? Citizens?
- "As citizens and professionals" is the phrase we have been using in surveys.
- Background:
 - This question was originally a question about where students learn from the student survey rewritten from a faculty point of view. Focus group responses to that question indicated that it wasn't useful because it was just guesswork. Also, the survey was too long, so the question was rewritten.
 - The overall intent is to link learning objectives to learning venues and establish a geography of learning. We want to compare students' viewpoints to those of faculty and staff to check, among other things, awareness that instructional faculty are not the only ones involved in teaching on campus. For example, do faculty and staff consider student employment part of student learning, as it is clear students do from the results of the previous survey?
 - People have had difficulty answering this question holistically. Making it a question of frequency seems to help circumvent this difficulty.
- Follow-up Discussion
 - It would be interesting to know, "Can students learn these things from you?" and "Could they learn more from you than they do?"
 - The survey will also raise awareness of consciously working with students on the ULOs.
 - A five point scale would be easier. An N/A answer is needed.
 - The question could be stated, "development as Cal Poly graduates."
 - Will there be a dilution effect when people consider all their interactions with students? To avoid this, the question could be stated, "In your most common experiences." Is that the intent or is the intent to capture a comprehensive view?
 - The question could be stated, "In working with students, how often do you stress the following?"

OPI Question

- Background:
 - Two statements were inadvertently left out of the version the Steering Committee is looking at but have been added back into the working draft: 1) “We promote sustainability in our curriculum and we practice it in our operations.” 2) “We have an agile curriculum that provides choice and prepares students for the future.”
 - There is a “where are we now” and a “where are we going” question with the same list of attributes. People in the focus groups answered the question in the present even when it was worded in the future, so it’s necessary to ask both.
 - The Steering Committee requested this question to test out aspects of OPI in order to help create a working definition.
- Discussion:
 - Many thought a ranking or prioritization would be more useful than agree/disagree. However, respondents could give an item low priority because they don’t think it’s important or because they think it’s already working well.
 - Now: what do we do well? Future: what needs improvement?
 - In the Summer Term survey, respondents were asked to rank items from very important to least important and then choose the most and least important item.
 - Too many double-barreled statements.
 - Statements to delete or alter:
 - Engage with the outside world
 - Prepare students for the future. This will be replaced with a statement regarding having an agile curriculum.
 - “We acknowledge many ways of knowing the world” needs to be strengthened.
 - Inclusion statement needs to be reworded, maybe “We practice inclusion.”
 - The STEM question could be deleted, changed to focus on professional preparation, or changed to “Should CP have a fully integrated curriculum?” Our peers have moved past dividing STEM and breadth to saying quality education requires integration. There was much discussion but no agreement.
 - This question will help set strategic direction. “Current draft OPI from the Strategic Plan Writing Group: An institution of higher education that has significant focus on programs that prepare individuals for direct entry into professional careers that are typically science and technology based.” Erling will send out Strategic Plan info relating to the discussion of professional preparation.
- Deployment
 - Though there is survey fatigue on campus, we can’t delay the faculty/staff survey.
 - There will be incentives offered.

WGs

- WG Chairs will write one page summaries of group progress. Scott passed out his summary. Summaries may highlight connections between WASC, assessment, and Strategic Planning.

Assessment Day

- The annual spring conversation on assessment event will focus on CPR preparation. Send any thoughts to Cheryl.