To:        UHH Faculty Congress  
From:     Seri Luangphinitth  
Chair, Assessment Support Committee  
Cc:      Don Straney, Chancellor  
Kenith Simmons, Interim VCAA  
April Komenaka, Accreditation Liaison Officer  
Jim Beets, Chair, Faculty Congress  
Re:      Report of the Assessment Support Committee  
Date: February 17, 2012  

As Chair of the Assessment Support Committee and as the lead in two important initiatives, I hereby submit the following report on the important information gleaned from the recent 98th Annual Meeting of the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U). Information and progress resulting from the Assessment 101 Workshop and 2-day Program Review Retreat of WASC in February will be reported at a later time.

My personal observations are highlighted in blue to help the reader differentiate between objective reporting and my own personal evaluation of the information gleaned. Action items that are the result of this conference are highlighted in red.

AAC&U

The Chairs of Assessment and General Education, along with the Congress Secretary, were sent to the AAC&U. Due to the stacking of important sessions at the same time, we duly split our times. This report details the sessions the Chair of Assessment attended.

1. Roundtable Action Dialogues: Civic Learning for a Diverse and Global Age

The discussion centered around the 2012 report by the National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement—A Crucible Moment, College Learning & Democracy’s Future. The report includes a Foreword by Martha Kanter, Under Secretary of the US Department of Education, and Eduardo Ochoa, Assistant Secretary for Postsecondary Education of the US Department of Education.
Of particular note is what the report calls “A Framework for Twenty-First Century Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement,” which gives an overarching and detailed description of four key areas—Knowledge, Skills, Values, and Collective Action:

CIVIC ETHOS governing campus life
The infusion of democratic values into the customs and habits of everyday practices, structures, and interactions; the defining character of the institution and those in it that emphasizes open-mindedness, civility, the worth of each person, ethical behaviors, and concern for the well-being of others; a spirit of public-mindedness that influences the goals of the institution and its engagement with local and global communities.

CIVIC LITERACY as a goal for every student
The cultivation of foundational knowledge about fundamental principles and debates about democracy expressed over time, both within the United States and in other countries; familiarity with several key historical struggles, campaigns, and social movements undertaken to achieve the full promise of democracy; the ability to think critically about complex issues and to seek and evaluate information about issues that have public consequences.

CIVIC INQUIRY integrated within the majors and general education
The practice of inquiring about the civic dimensions and public consequences of a subject of study; the exploration of the impact of choices on different constituencies and entities, including the planet; the deliberate consideration of differing points of view; the ability to describe and analyze civic intellectual debates within one’s major or areas of study.

CIVIC ACTION as lifelong practice
The capacity and commitment both to participate constructively with diverse others and to work collectively to address common problems; the practice of working in a pluralistic society and world to improve the quality of people’s lives and the sustainability of the planet; the ability to analyze systems in order to plan and engage in public action; the moral and political courage to take risks to achieve a greater public good. (p. 15)


From an assessment standpoint, the conflation of multiculturalism as a realm of study versus multiculturalism as values fully embraced by students and faculty is problematic. The simply study of African American history does not automatically guarantee empathy nor do indirect assessments (which seem to be the predominant method of “testing” student values such as open-mindedness and respect) are not always valid. As it stands, only the CIRP and NSSE provide some data on these outcomes, but “multiple measures are needed to capture students’ ability to demonstrate civic competencies” (Finley, p.3).

More troubling is the call by the report for institutions to “practice civic inquiry across all fields,” specifically, the report details the practice of civic inquiry across *ALL* fields of study and gives a sample institutional outcome: “Define within departments, programs, and disciplines the public purposes of their respective fields, the civic inquiries most urgent to explore, and the best way
to infuse civic learning outcomes progressively across the major” (p. 32). This suggests that the emphasis may translate into pressures placed on whole departments to demonstrate such competencies at graduation.

2. Defining the Public Purposes of Faculty Scholarship and Teaching

Due to the increased scrutiny of universities as educators of “citizens,” the one uptick to this momentum towards civic engagement is the rethinking of faculty publications. Given the pressure on faculty to publish in peer-reviewed journal articles, very little faculty research actually has any direct impact in the communities we serve, which the panelists observed as the fundamental obstacle we need to overcome if we want to ensure that universities become places of civic engagement.

These questions were posed at the forum: (1) What is public scholarship? (2) How do we promote and reward it? (3) What individuals and groups need to be talking about or working on promotion policies for engaged faculty members?

The debate soon centered on the “value” of a peer-reviewed article on alcohol consumption during pregnancy versus a community pamphlet that informs the public on the dangers of drinking while being pregnant. For someone in a academic discipline of nursing, more emphasis may be given for the first while the second would be totally dismissed, and yet the public engagement is far more apparent in the latter. This contradiction is what lies at the heart of the current disconnect in theory and practice of civic engagement in higher education.

3. Reclaiming Democracy: Facing the Consequences of Contingent Employment in Higher Education

This all-day “summit” was hosted by the New Faculty Majority Foundation along with the AAC&U.

The summit opened with remarks by Gary Rhodes, Professor of Higher Education (University of Arizona) and the Director for the Center for the Future in Higher Education. He made note of Vice President Biden’s comments on January 13 at a Pennsylvania high school, where he was purported to have said that one of the problems leading to the increasing cost of education is due to “Salaries for college professors [which] have escalated” because there is “a lot of competition for the finest professors. They all want the Nobel Laureates” (from the article “Faculty Groups Try To Educate Biden on Salaries” at http://insidehighered.com). He is also alleged to have said that the average pay of $100,000 for faculty is “gouging” the system.

The New Faculty majority, a lobbying group that has been formed to tackle issues of contingency faculty, wanted to make clear at the symposium that this myth has been the most problematic challenge in terms of really scrutinizing the cost of education, because that myth overlooks the reality that “Adjunct, contingent faculty members now make up over 1 million of the 1.5 million people teaching in American colleges and universities” (“Among the Majority” at http://insidehighered.com). In fact, Gary Rhoades, from the Center for the Study of Higher Education at the University of Arizona, noted at this summit that under 30% of faculty nationwide are tenured; full-time non-tenurable faculty make up around 19%.
The fact that instructors, adjuncts and graduate teaching assistants account for the bulk of teaching in lower-level General Education, where essential key skills are taught (but is also the time when many students also fail or drop out) underscores the further irony that such faculty often do not have offices, have no voice in faculty governance, are not consulted in curricular or pedagogical issues, are given little if no recourse to professional development, may often teach at several institutions, and on average make less than $25,000 nation-wide. So while the AAC&U and many college administrators have been promoting civic engagement and the values of “respect for freedom and human dignity, empathy, open-mindedness, tolerance, justice, equality, ethical integrity, an responsibility to the larger good,” the challenge is to reform universities so the “business” of exploitation and labor hierarchy gives way to an actual model of the very democracy we want our students to learn and embrace.


The following are notes taken from the ACAD Workshop on Developing Assessment vis-à-vis Strategic Planning. The paid workshop was advertised as a hands-on session that would allow participants to develop an actual assessment plan. Unfortunately, this turned out to be one of the biggest disappointments of the conference as there was no actual work facilitated. However, the following constitutes the information from the PowerPoint shown to the audience, which does provide some useful contexts for why assessment needs to align with strategic planning and two case studies that provide insight into how other campuses undertake this process:

**Why Focus on Mission-Based Assessment?**

- Resource challenge. We are asked to do more with less. What programs should be supported with these fewer resources?
- Cost challenge. We are asked to explain why students should pay what they are for their education.
- Problem. These constraints require institutions to decide what is most important concerning these first two questions.
- Solution. Mission-statements articulate the highest ideals for graduates. They serve as tools to evaluate what fits in mission and thus the institution.

**Benefits**

- By highlighting mission-based assessment, provides a principled foundation for planning
- Fosters dialogues that enhance core educational principles
- Helps institutions to emphasize its uniqueness and distinctiveness (history, commitments, etc.)
Challenges

• Evokes very strong feeling and beliefs about how the institution operates now and in the future
• Time is required for a stable consensus to emerge and for priorities to appear (to guide planning)
• Explicit comparisons between like and peer institutions will also occur (dangers of over-homogenization)

Purpose of this workshop

• Explore how institutional identity (based on a college’s mission) can guide decisions about resources and educating students
• Promote assessment as a means of defining and facilitating institutional priorities
• Encourage dialogues about explicitly using college mission statement.

Mission-Defined Assessment

• Institutional identity = mission-based foundation of aspirations for graduates
• Assessment = mission-defined tool for evaluating effectiveness and continually striving for better expression of institutional identity
• In order for assessment to effectively inform strategic planning decisions and communication, four principles should be followed:

GOALS FOR INSTITUTIONS:

1. Resist the test or hoop version
   • Instead, build a healthy culture of assessment that focuses on commitment to student learning.
   • Goal = enable faculty and staff to fully own assessment initiatives as a means of fulfilling institutional mission
   • Keep an eye on the whole (there are always going to be nay-sayers), but the change in culture can take place around them.

2. Coordinate academic and student affairs goals (academic learning and student development need to be complementary and coordinated)
   • Address student learning holistically and not in a compartmentalized manner
   • Tensions will rise between these two entities

3. Aggregate general education, academic program and co-curricular domains of student learning.
   • All domains of student learning need to intersect with each other
   • Integrate GE, academic major/minor, and co-curricular assessment domains together into a coherent, multi-layer whole focused on institutional student learning
• Requires attention to multiple domains that may be driven by different motivations

4. Communicating with internal and external audience
• Ultimate goal should be clear articulation of institution’s priorities and how those priorities are achieved
• Goal = provide a clear and consistent message to external audiences (i.e. potential students, parents, alumni, employers) and internal members
• Needs legwork (networking) especially to internal audiences which may not be well informed about these processes.

Case Study (Macalester College)

Data points generally reported are (1) retention rates, (2) graduation rates, (3) student credit hours, (4) demographics, (5) etc. But these data points are not enough to answer how well the college is doing with regard to its mission statement.

They barely passed accreditation in 2006. In response to this, a committee was formed to do assessment for the sake of accreditation. In 2008, the entire committee resigned.

Incremental steps:

1. Department assessment of the major (getting department chairs to dig up their old plans and start writing up action plans—then get them to start converting their peers)
2. Assessment of general education delegated to the general education committee
3. Development of student learning committee to look holistically at overall institutional assessment
4. Don’t take on everything...so assessment incrementally (i.e. one skill per year)
5. Continually resists the “test” or “hoop” view of assessment
6. Coordinate academic and student affairs goals
7. Aggregating general education, academic program, and co-curricular domains of student learning
8. Started to regularly communicate with internal and external audiences (everything needs to be transparent and presented in a meaningful way)
Case Study (Westminster College)

Mission Statement: It shall be the mission of Westminster College to educate and inspire all its students through a distinctive liberal arts curriculum and a dynamic developmental experience; to challenge them to be critically aware, life-long learners and leaders of character, committed to the values of integrity, fairness, respect and responsibility; and to prepare them for lives of success, significance and service.

Assessment Tools:
IDEA survey and Individual courses
NSSE
CLA
Educational Benchmarking (EBI)
Student Satisfaction Survey
Columns Concert Survey/Essay
Departmental Assessment
Program Reviews
Alumni and Employer Surveys
Placement Rates

From an assessment standpoint, this mismatch between the concepts of civic engagement or ethical reasoning (i.e. “leaders of character” and the tool highlighted to assess it (the CLA) is what I, personally, feel is a totally inappropriate usage of the standardized test. I raised this issue with the panel, along with the problem that testing juniors with the CLA does not provide evidence that their degree actually adds substantial value to a student’s sense of ethics or civic engagement.

A Look at UHH

During the break-out sessions, the UHH contingency decided to form our own group to tackle the task for which we were sent: to begin mapping assessment to our Strategic Plan. This is needed in order that we have measurable and measurement systems in place to help us determine how well we are (or are not) meeting what we say in that plan.

A perusal of the Strategic Plan (which does not include actual institutional learning outcomes) revealed ten (10) imbedded goals that we (collectively) need to demonstrate success in meeting our strategic plan. These ten were broken into three categories of assessment:

Existing Raw Data
1. Significantly increase the number of Native Hawaiian graduates (25%)
2. Students will have opportunities to engage with faculty in research

**Directly Measurable**

3. Students will demonstrate innovation
4. Students will demonstrate creativity
5. Students will demonstrate critical thinking
6. Students will cultivate and demonstrate a foundational understanding of Hawai‘i’s unique heritage from an indigenous base known for its history of embracing diversity

**Indirectly Measurable**

7. Every student will have opportunities for applied learning that result in civic engagement
8. Students will contribute positively to their communities
9. Students demonstrate multicultural fluency by effectively interacting and communicating with others
10. Student will develop and articulate an awareness of self and others

These “new” outcomes will be vetted with the team that is going to the WASC Program Review Retreat and per consultation with WASC mentors, we will propose a means of integrating these appropriately into Program Review and General Education Assessment.

**Action Items needed for us at UHH:**

All but items 5 and 10 are currently not included in our current GE learning outcomes nor are they indicators that are asked for from departments and programs.

1. Alignment needed between strategic plan, program review, General Education, and WASC/Lumina.
2. Descriptors (criteria) developed with faculty input for the red skills identified above (Survey Monkey). These descriptors currently do not exist in the current General Education list of skills and/or the rubrics that have already been developed.
3. Given proposed changes to WASC accreditation and the LUMINA DQP, a smaller sub-committee will weigh how these changes may (or may not) inform the ongoing revision of Program Review Guidelines.