Assessment Support Committee Report to Congress
February 26, 2010

Per the “new” WASC rubrics for Accreditation Teams:

1. Discipline-specific learning in Programs needs to be integrated with “institution-wide learning outcomes” (GE);

2. Institution-wide outcomes should focus on the “most important knowledge, skills, and values students learn,” such as communication skills, critical thinking, and information literacy.

3. Content-specific and course-specific goals should not be confused with institution-wide outcomes. For example, completing a course/internship does not the same as asking what is learned in the course or activity (i.e. application of theory to real-life practice).

These criteria point to the following: a comprehensive educational package, to WASC, is one that uses universal skills to link courses across the disciplines. In other words, a baccalaureate degree would be less about simply taking courses to fulfill area requirements as opposed to a coherent experience in which all courses, regardless of the content, would teach to shared goals. This is what WASC sees as curriculum coherence.

Because we haven’t even really set the base (GE), it was suggested back in October at the WASC Level II retreat that the Assessment Committee set aside Program Review to work on creating an interdisciplinary assessment program based on the 6 learning outcomes ratified by Congress.

With support from the VCAA, VCSA, various Deans and Division Chairs, the entire Assessment Support Committee was sent to the last Level II Retreat to work on those 6 rubrics. Our work there has attracted the attention of one Assessment Expert, Dr. Amy Driscoll, who has indicated she will be issuing a letter, addressed to the Chancellor, on what we have accomplished as what she sees as “best practice.” A copy of the informal email/letter is included with your packets.

The next step for the Committee is to test-pilot the rubrics amongst ourselves with an array of papers from the 100-400 level. We are looking to accomplish the following by May:

1. Refine the rubrics based on our readings;
2. Define the procedure for calibration among readers/assessors;
3. Start an initial discussion of the scaffolding of skills from the 100-400 level vis-à-vis the rubrics;
4. Compile a list of appropriate student work (i.e. annotated bibliography, research paper, etc.) for each rubric;
5. Start a dialogue on the possibility of other assessment tools per the kinds of assignments faculty give students.

Come fall of 2010-spring 2011, we will start test reading among a larger group. This will be the best time to bring in all of the GE Committee to serve as additional readers and/or run assessment among multiple sections of the same course.