The purpose of this memorandum is to propose a plan of action to facilitate program review and to cultivate key assessment skills among faculty to make facilitation possible.

As Chair of the Assessment Support Committee for the past three years, I have been privy to many conversations regarding program review. Even though reported in August 30, 2010 on the “ideal” function of program review (please refer to schemata attached to this memorandum), very little has been done to make program review an effective mechanism for ensuring either course-level and program-level goals or for supporting the broader success of general education (as a comprehensive program) or the overall mission of the university. I have also heard many complaints from department chairs on the actual guidelines for program review and how the entire process was a meaningless and futile exercise that culminates in a document that “sits on someone’s shelf.” This frustration is clearly evident in the current situation—only one out of five programs scheduled for review this year is planning on submission.

Apart from the problem with the document itself (which is highly verbose and convoluted) and the lack of clear communication between lower administration and departments, the main reason faculty resist program review is that they simply don’t understand it and how assessment is a fundamental part of evidence-based decision-making. As I reported in my most recent report to the Congress (21 October 2011), I cite a current chair who complains “I’ve been chatting with chairs and others in my building regarding many things, including assessment when it comes up, and it seems that many of our colleagues still don’t really understand what it is, and, even worse, have a very negative view of it, perhaps with some reason, since I know it has been used in some parts of the country in ways for which it was never intended” (p. 3).

Training faculty will be crucial in turning around this situation. As Trudy Banta (2002) argues in her essay “Characteristics of Effective Outcomes Assessment,” it is imperative that faculty and staff “development” be recognized as a key requirement for success—Banta cites schools that provide support in the form of workshops, trips to conferences and materials as institutions “providing the kind of environment for assessment that is receptive, supportive and enabling” (p. 274). Put simply, you cannot ask people to do anything for which they are not trained to do.

I would like to point out that when I took my entire committee up to WASC in January of 2010, we crafted rubrics for five (5) of the six (6) GE learning outcomes in less than 72 hours’ time. Those rubrics have since been fine-tuned and are now in the final phases of testing in limited classes. I would also like to point out that our Diversity rubric in general has attracted national attention—Amy Driscoll has been using it in her workshops with schools nationally and we also presented it at...
the most recent AAC&U. When faculty are enabled with the expertise and are given the opportunity to work in such venues, such accomplishments are possible and have large positive impact on our campus.

Therefore, as I stated in my last report to Congress, it is imperative for (1) faculty to receive the training necessary for them to understand the actual purpose of assessment, and (2) to revise the program review guidelines that allow them to exercise this expertise. I am recommending that 10-15 members from both the GE and the Assessment Support Committee be sent for the one-day WASC Assessment 101 training in Honolulu on February 1, 2012. I am also recommending that a group of 6-8 core senior faculty members representing all three divisions of CAS, CAFNRM and CHL remain for the 2-day Outcomes-based Program Review Workshop. (As CoBE and CoP have separate accrediting bodies, their assessment needs should be addressed via those specific venues)

The breakdown of cost is as follows:

Assessment 101 Workshop fee: $195 per person x 15 $2,925
Program Review Workshop fee: $485 x 8 $3,880
Hotel: $165 per night (2 people sharing, Program Review participants only) $1,650 (exclusive of tax)
Airfare: $2,400
Ground transportation: $150

TOTAL: $11,005.00

I want to stress that the attendance of these faculty should be seen as an investment in the future that should be maintained. If 10-15 people attend the assessment workshop every year, in 5 years that would mean at least 50 members of the faculty body will not only have had training in assessment but they will have direct access to WASC and can then hear for themselves what our institution needs to do in terms of accreditation.

I would also like to mention that part of my expenses will be underwritten by WASC as I have been tapped as a facilitator for the Assessment 101 session.