

## Summary of CAA Assessment Symposium, October 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>, 2009

### Thursday, October 15th

After introductions and a brief catch-up, we began with considering Reviewing Assessments and issues involved with that. Donna reported that the review process has shifted over the last several years. The most recent shift was to add a review element to the software they developed which will store. She also mentioned that SACS wants documentation about how we are using assessment data. James Madison also has training for assessment on the web, along with pod casts to help folks along. At George Mason there are workshops offered through the Center for Teaching Excellence. At Georgia State, the Director of Academic Assessment and the Director of Administrative Units Assessment offer several workshops for Assessment Coordinators in each department or academic program. Issues included concern for inter-rater reliability, correlations, and how student learning information feeds into Academic Program Reviews on each campus.

Conversation about accreditation agencies: apparently the DOE wanted to do away with them at the higher education levels so they enhanced requirements and stringent measures. There was also discussion about what works for assessment in general education (and accreditation and reaffirmation requirements). Then discussion shifted to meeting with Provosts....

Discussed what concerns and topics we would like to share with Provosts. They ranged from linking assessment to the budget, components of assessment, value-added issues, sustaining excellence, how Provosts see utility in assessment data. The Provosts then responded with what they would like to see: clear data, trends, reports, and “dashboards” for efficiency, as well as transparency, measures across Colleges (within universities and across universities), and the ability to use information for strategic planning and budget decisions.

### Friday, October 16<sup>th</sup>

Assessment of graduate student learning – suggestion that we look for patterns over time and follow group to next course, then measure same thing in the same way. Many schools offer Professional Seminars for graduate students early in their programs. These courses provide opportunities to assess learning that can also be assessed later through comprehensive exams and thesis/dissertations. At one school, every student gets a letter from her Advisor each semester or year about her progress. A suggestion for a resource is Barbara E. Lovitts', *Making Implicit Explicit*, which includes dissertation rubrics.

As for involving students, one school had students on the department assessment committee. James Madison found that 60% of students wanted feedback on university-wide assessments. They post a link to the website for students to find out their scores as well as comparisons to faculty standards and to other students).

Within the discussion of Administrative Assessment and Academic Assessment, there was a suggestion to declare a change in philosophy for our role in assessment from police to consultants. We stand in a middle place between the President, Provost, and Deans, and the faculty (and Chairs) on the Academic side, and between the President, VPs and the Directors and upper administration on the Administrative side. One school reports that their assessments seem to view Administrative Assessment more in terms of Process than Impact or Outcome. More discussion along these lines would be good for next meeting.

We also discussed where the consequences for assessment reporting come from.... Are there any definable consequences beyond accreditation? Suggestions for setting up Awards for Excellence in Assessment that the Provosts might sponsor (for AY 2010-2011). Also develop Assessment Fellows (sponsored by the Provosts), summer program with a stipend or something similar. CAA could house exemplar assessment program information for exchange and post on website.

We discussed several hurdles we experience: that faculty often feel evaluated by assessment, and that faculty believe student learning assessment should be about undergraduate learning – that faculty expect graduate students are learning what they need to know for their careers. There is a sense of insult for assessing graduate student learning. We also discussed the accountability issues for lack of quality and that some programs do not have a culminating project or experience (faculty express that these are burden for them – lots of reaction to that....)

It was invaluable to have a representative from GSU's Library to see an example of a different perspective. She reported that they struggle with understanding assessment as NOT equivalent to annual performance evaluations, but that it is improving. She also mentioned that faculty often re-use library handouts and information sheets without checking whether they have been updated. Then the confusion creates assessment reports that don't inform the Library in helpful ways.

Finally, the following suggestions based on our conversations were put forward:

- Share a list of favorite sources/resources (e.g., book mentioned above and another called *Crossing the Line*)
- Follow-up about meeting with Accreditors (perhaps in April?)
- Continue conversation format with coming in for reception and meeting one day from 9:00 – 3:00.
- Highlight CAA Exemplars on website
- Follow up with discussion of technology and sharing feedback with students
- Consider the role of students on committees (everyone would bring the process they use at their institutions)
- Solicit topics again
- Create list-serve or blog for CAA Assessment Group