Program Review and Assessment Committee

Thursday, May 10, 2007
UL1126
1:30-3:00 p.m.
Karen Johnson, Chair
Joshua Smith, Vice Chair

AGENDA –

1.   Approval of the minutes of April meeting .... K. Johnson

2.   PRAC Grant Presentation... P. Jeffries

3.   Presentation on Focus Groups in Assessment .... J. Smith
                                                                                                   M. Hansen
                                                                                                   M. Meadows
                                                                                                   Lauren Chism

4.   Committee Reports
            Advanced Practitioners .... M. Hansen and J. Smith
            Performance Indicators.. G. Pike
            e-Portfolio .... S. Kahn
            Graduate Issues ....R. Applegate
            Grants...L. Houser
            Program Review .... ?

5.   Year End Thanks .... K. Johnson
                                                                                                         J. Smith
                                                                                                         T. Banta

6.   Adjournment .... K. Johnson

MINUTES –

Members Present:
William Agbor-Baiyee, Drew Appleby, Rachel Applegate, Kate Baird, Trudy
Banta, Karen Black, Polly Boruff-Jones, Elaine Cooney, William Crabtree, Yao-Yi
Fu, Michele Hansen, Krista Hoffmann-Longtin, Karen Johnson, Susan Kahn,
Hea-Won Kim, Joyce Mac Kinnon, Melinda Meadows, Howard Mzumara, Joanne
Orr, Gary Pike, Kenneth Rennels, Elizabeth Rubens, Katherine Schilling, Joshua
Smith, Mark Urtel, Russell Vertner, Debra Winikates, Marianne Wokeck, Nancy
Young

Minutes approved for April as written.

Committee Reports

Advanced Practitioners. M. Hansen reported that the Advanced Practitioners subcommittee includes 7-10 members who meet regularly. Meetings are conducted as roundtables, with discussion of the various research projects members are working on. Discussions focus on approaches to assessing student learning (e.g., use of rubrics; focus groups). The subcommittee has offered two workshops to PRAC: Using Program Theory and Using Focus Groups in Assessment. Hansen commented that members seem to enjoy participating in the subcommittee, which provides opportunities to learn about hot topics in assessment and to connect research interests. J. Smith asked for suggestions for a new name for the subcommittee. M. Wokeck suggested "Assessment Roundtable."

Performance Indicators. G. Pike discussed the committee's evaluation of the subgoals and indicators under the university's "Support and enhance effective teaching" and "Enhance undergraduate student learning and success" goals. Three subgoals under the first goal scored green, with one subgoal, "Engagement of students, through the curriculum and co-curriculum, in learning about their own and other culture and belief systems," scoring yellow. Under the second goal, three subgoals again scored green, but "Student academic progress and achievement" scored red, because of IUPUI's low retention rates, which have been dropping for the past several years.

Pike made two recommendations for next year:
1. Revisit the indicators. Some indicators should be dropped or replaced.

2. Develop evaluation criteria. Currently, the subgoals and indicators do not identify specific desired levels of performance, making them difficult to evaluate and leading to variation from year-to-year, even with similar data, because of changes in subcommittee personnel.

ePortfolio. S. Kahn provided an update on the ePortfolio initiative as well as on the subcommittee's work over the past year. A new ePortfolio team was constituted this year, including staff from the Center for Teaching and Learning, the Office for Professional Development, Planning and Institutional Improvement, and UITS. UITS has committed to contributing new funding and staff and ensuring good progress on software development in 2007-2008. Several departments currently have Integrative Department Grants to incorporate the ePortfolio into their curricula; the ePort team has been getting input from those departments about what the ePort software needs to do for their purposes. The top priority has been determined to be the assessment functions of the software. Important functions will include mapping of PULs to program-specific outcomes and course-specific outcomes and aggregating and disaggregating assessment data. An RFP is out now for the next round of Integrative Department Grants, with a deadline of May 18.

The ePortfolio Subcommittee has contributed to determining what the ePort software needs to be able to do to support assessment functions, although most committee members are also members of the main ePort team. Kahn thanked E. Cooney and P. Boruff-Jones for providing important input from the faculty perspective. M. Meadows asked about rumors that ePort would not be funded next year, and Kahn replied that she was fairly confident that there would be funding for the upcoming year. T. Banta cautioned that, given current trends in the federal Department of Education, the ePort must be advanced; otherwise, standardized tests may be forced upon IUPUI. Kahn added that many departments at IUPUI have expressed interest in ePort. The project is essential to providing a strategy for assessing campus-wide learning of the PULs , which will be needed for institutional accreditation. Wokeck noted that faculty support at all stages of the project is essential to its success.

Graduate Issues. R. Applegate explained that the subcommittee needs a list of graduate programs subject to specialized accreditation. One issue the subcommittee has noted is that graduate programs lack a set of common learning outcomes like the PULs at the undergraduate level. Next year, Applegate hopes that PRAC will devote attention to graduate programs with specialized accreditation needs. Because it was a challenge to schedule meetings, the subcommittee met virtually several times. Smith asked the group to develop a presentation/workshop for PRAC in the fall. Applegate agreed and asked PRAC members to appropriate graduate faculty colleagues to those sessions.

Grants. K. Johnson acknowledged the hard work of both PRAC grant recipients and members of the subcommittee. This year's grantees included faculty from the School of Engineering, the School of Education, the School of Physical Education and Tourism Management, the School of Nursing, and the Center for Teaching and Learning. Johnson thanked subcommittee members for their participation.

Program Review. Black reported that as the Director of Program Review, she has found that it is crucial for the success of the program review process that department chairs come up with a solid review team. One ongoing focus of the subcommittee has been review of self-study drafts before they are sent to the Dean. E. Rubens and H. Mzumara noted a need for a focus on teaching evaluation in program reviews; a seventh subcommittee devoted to this topic will be added next year.

Presentation on Focus Groups in Assessment
Smith provided a brief introduction to the use of focus groups on behalf of the Advanced Practitioners Subcommittee. Clearly defined research questions are important to selecting focus group members and generating useful data. Articulating these questions may be the most difficult part of the process, but

these questions should guide the formation of the group. Directing and moderating a focus group is also challenging. Focus group methodologies are largely drawn from the interview literature and from marketing techniques.

Hansen noted that, in her research, she uses focus groups to understand data in greater depth. Focus groups can be used to generate survey items and to help understand results of written surveys. Wokeck asked when focus groups would be chosen over written surveys and commented that focus group results might lack the reflective component that writing provides. Hansen responded that some researchers support giving group members something to write about first and then discussing it as a group. Meadows mentioned that focus groups can be useful in gaining insight into student learning and advancing understanding of program improvement.

Smith then conducted a brief focus group about the value of PRAC to the campus and to individual faculty members to illustrate a typical approach. During the debriefing, he further explained several points. Before the group discussion, it is important to decide whether interview questions will be structured or unstructured. Introductory questions are posed at the beginning of the focus group discussion to make members comfortable with voicing their opinions. The most important questions are usually asked during the middle part of the discussion. Most groups use a structured verbal protocol, based on the IRB consent form, to explain the purposes and roles of the facilitator and assistant. The facilitator should ask the questions, and avoid answering or participating in the conversation. Periodic summaries help to move the group through the discussion protocol and to give individuals a voice. The most difficult task in a focus group is to get the conversation going. Hansen discussed the benefits of letting undergraduate and graduate students run focus groups used for assessment. She commented that a more structured interview approach may be better suited for student facilitators, who tend to be inexperienced.

Meadows related some of her experiences as the Curriculum and Program Assessment Director at the School of Dentistry. Focus groups at the school were initially student-moderated, with the class president generating a comprehensive summary. Over time, additional supervision of the process was needed, so the school developed a more standardized approach. Students are randomly selected by cohort. Questions are generated from survey data, faculty requests, and past focus group experiences. Faculty-generated questions have increased as faculty members have learned to view the focus groups as a support rather than a threat. Meadows noted the importance of paying attention to small-group dynamics, for example by using icebreakers to help students to find their voice. The notes from the groups are used to develop a summary, which is then distributed to instructors. Findings are discussed at faculty meetings. Meadows highlighted the importance of building an action plan upon assessment findings from focus groups.

Year-End Thanks

T. Banta noted that the federal Department of Education is revisiting its regulations of accrediting associations. Accreditors must show in their standards that they are looking at general education learning outcomes like the PULs, and ways to measure these and report results, using scores that allow comparison with other institutions. Annual PRAC reports show how IUPUI schools and departments are conducting assessment and making changes based on findings; it is important that we continue to work on developing effective assessment processes and submitting these reports on time.

Johnson and Smith thanked PRAC members for their hard work and commitment over the year.

Meeting was adjourned at 3:05 PM.