

Program Review and Assessment Committee

Thursday, March 22, 2007

UL1116

1:30-3:00 p.m.

Karen Johnson, Chair

Joshua Smith, Vice Chair

AGENDA –

1. Approval of the minutes of the December meeting K. Johnson
2. Introduction of Visitors and PRAC members..... T. Banta
3. Discussion of Panel on Focused Reviews and Options
for Future Panel Presentations J. Smith
4. General Discussion of Program Review Experiences..... K. Johnson
5. Report on the PUL discussion at UFC K. Johnson
6. General Discussion of Best Practices and Barriers for
Beginning Assessment Systems T. Banta
7. Discussion of Annual Report Forms T. Banta
8. Announcements..... K. Johnson
Grants SubcommitteeL. Houser
9. Adjournment K. Johnson

MINUTES –

Members Present: Drew Appleby, Trudy Banta, Allison Barton, Karen Black, Craig McDaniel, Janet Fulton, Crystal Garcia, Michele Hansen, Krista Hoffmann-Longtin, Linda Houser, Karen Johnson, Susan Kahn, Joyce Mac Kinnon, Howard Mzumara, Joanne Orr, Gary Pike, Irene Queiro-Tajalli, Elizabeth Rubens, Katherine Schilling, Joshua Smith, Kathy Steinberg, Randi Stocker, Mark Urtel, Russell Vertner

Guests: Peter Johnsen (Provost) and Robert Wolffe and Robert Bolla (Associate Provosts) from Bradley University, Peoria, IL.

Minutes from the February meeting were approved as written.

Discussion of Panel on Focused Reviews and Options for Future Panel Presentations

J. Smith asked members to consider the possibility of including panel discussions as a regular feature of next year's PRAC meetings. He asked members about their reactions to last month's focused review panel and for suggestions about other types of panels that would be useful to them. R. Vertner commented that the School of Business underwent a focused review several years ago and that the panel presentation was a good refresher for him. He recommended that units consider smaller, annual focused reviews as part of their assessment work. K. Johnson suggested that focused reviews might be especially valuable as follow-ups to general program reviews. Smith asked who should represent units on future panels. Vertner responded that participation of senior leadership would be helpful for covering budgetary and other resource issues. He added that if the focused review panel becomes more common, we should invite non-PRAC faculty/staff to attend the panel discussions. Johnson agreed with Vertner and noted the importance of encouraging more faculty participation in program review.

In response to Smith's request for additional comments, Johnson noted that it would be important to have a panel representing general program reviews as well. G. Pike added that it is useful to learn as much as we can about the various program review processes. He would also like to see more discussion of the general reviews, as well as of the focused reviews, because the two are very different. Smith asked about the make-up of general review panels. Pike replied that the Program Review Subcommittee may be better equipped to decide whom to bring together for a general review panel. K. Black said that programs in the Schools of Liberal Arts and Science are not subject to specialized accreditation and thus might be best suited to talk about the value of the full review.

M. Hansen commented that she found it useful to hear about the focused reviews, because the information helped her to understand how the process might benefit her unit, University College, as it attempts to deal with such issues as first-year student retention. J. Fulton noted that it would be helpful to make the information from panel discussions available to other departments or units and suggested taping the presentations and posting them on the Internet. Vertner proposed using a Web cam during the panel discussions that would allow others on campus to log in and listen. In this case, times or locations of PRAC meetings would not need to be changed to accommodate the additional audience.

Introduction of Visitors and PRAC members

T. Banta introduced three visitors from Bradley University: Dr. Peter Johnsen, Dr. Robert Wolffe, and Dr. Robert Bolla. PRAC members introduced themselves. Dr. Johnsen, Bradley's provost, thanked members for the opportunity to attend the meeting and interact with IUPUI faculty/staff to learn more about outcomes assessment.

General Discussion of Program Review Expectations

K. Johnson led the discussion on program review experiences. J. Mac Kinnon commented that her unit's experience was positive and that it received excellent support during the process. Vertner said that his school's experience was also useful and that he found it interesting to compare what people said they are doing to what they were actually doing. Program reviews provide feedback and information that one cannot get anywhere else. He suggested that reviews occur more often, even annually, in a more informal manner. L. Houser noted that program reviews helped the School of Education to focus on issues/questions that faculty and administrators had struggled with for years, but that were not covered by its accreditation body. I. Queiro-Tajalli added that the School of Social Work was one of the first schools to undergo a review (1995) and that it elected to have the BS and MSW programs reviewed. The review focused on environment, administration, and assessment. Based on the review, changes were made and the school began to build a culture of assessment, one that continues today.

Pike commented that the School of Liberal Arts and the School of Science might benefit from focused review. Fulton noted that it takes substantial planning time to prepare for a review. In preparing for an accreditation review, everyone must be engaged in the process through development of materials, interpretation of findings, and mock reviews. Houser mentioned that the School of Education's accreditation reviews have become outcomes-focused, rather than input-focused. Hoffmann-Longtin observed that while she understood the substantial time commitment involved, a small focused review is useful and the data can be valuable when the unit seeks external funding. She added that this could be a selling point for the Schools of Liberal Arts and Science. Black mentioned that the Program Review Subcommittee is getting a group together in the School of Liberal Arts; Richard Turner has gathered a group of department chairs to tailor self-study documents and develop school-wide capacity statements. D. Appleby suggested involving students in the review process; students should not be assessed as if they are objects.

Report on the PUL Discussion at UFC

Johnson reported that the Faculty Council Academic Affairs Committee reviewed the wording of the critical thinking PUL. The definition of critical thinking was discussed and dissected. The inclusion of the word “beliefs” was the subject of extensive debate, but, in the end, the word was left in the document. The introductory and prefatory language also occasioned considerable discussion. Ultimately, the principle was sent back to the committee with a request to re-examine the language. The committee did not vote, because this issue was not listed as an action item on the agenda; the new language, along with the introductory statements, is likely to go up for a full vote at the next meeting. Council members seemed satisfied with the idea that the PULs could be revisited and that there should be a procedure for doing so. Johnson expressed her gratitude to Betty Jones for moving the PULs forward in the committee.

General Discussion of Best Practices and Barriers for Beginning Assessment Systems

Banta opened the discussion by asking members about the most difficult challenges they deal with as they work to build assessment systems in their schools. E. Rubens said that people fear someone looking over their shoulders. Building relationships with them is a way to overcome this challenge. C. Garcia said that assessment needs to be a collaborative effort, but currently is not. She noted the need for a mechanism for involving more faculty members in assessment. S. Kahn mentioned that the TLT Group is hosting an upcoming Internet workshop on addressing frequently heard objections to assessment and has been developing a list of these objections. She promised to forward information about the session to the rest of the committee. Smith said that faculty are not really trained to do assessment and do not feel connected to its outcomes. They *are* committed to their classes and their scholarship, however, so assessment efforts might focus on these areas, where faculty buy-in is likely to be greater.

C. McDaniel observed that teachers’ resistance is valid when assessment procedures do not recognize grades as an indicator of student learning. Houser responded that program reviews are moving away from grades as documentation of content knowledge; grades reflect overall achievements, rather than specific competences. Banta added that grades have extraneous components, such as attendance, participation, and extra credit. Kahn suggested that dialogue about what grades say about groups of students across courses, programs, and institutions could help to make faculty more conscious of what their grades represent in terms of student learning.

Provost Johnsen from Bradley noted that misperceptions of what academic freedom means can be a barrier to assessment. Fulton said that the question of who owns assessment data represents another barrier; asking for one’s course to be evaluated is different than having the report sent to one’s department chair. She asked how information might be de-identified so that faculty members feel

more comfortable about a course-level assessment. Provost Johnsen asked whether assessment data are used for tenure decisions at IUPUI. Mac Kinnon replied that these data can be used in both summative and formative ways. If progress can be shown, this can be positive in an annual review. Queiro-Tajalli said that the School of Social Work understands the difference between accountability and academic freedom. Across the country, faculty members seem to be uncomfortable with assessment, because they see it as a tool to weed them out, rather than as information to be used for faculty development and curriculum improvement.

Discussion of Annual Report Forms

Banta pointed out that language recently inserted into the PULs document under consideration by the Academic Affairs Committee requires that schools plan, implement, and assess progress toward student achievement of the PULs. Schools will be asked to provide implementation plans at the beginning of the next academic year and a report of progress at the end of each year, if the language is approved. Essentially, PRAC members already provide such information in their annual PRAC reports, so Banta does not anticipate that passage of this resolution will lead to major changes in practice. The format of reports for this year has been sent to members; any questions should be directed to her.

Announcements

K. Johnson announced that before the end of the year (in the April and May meetings), PRAC members need to hear reports from each of the subcommittees concerning activities conducted during 2006-07.

Meeting adjourned at 3:00 p.m.