Program Review and Assessment Committee Minutes

February, February 11, 2016, 1:15-2:45pm, CE 307

Present: K. Alfrey, S. Baker, T. Banta, R. Bentley, K. Black, L. Bozeman, C. Gentle-Genitty, T. Hahn, E. Huang, S. Hundley, D. Jerolimov, C. Kacius, M. Kolb, J. Lee, S. Lowe, M. Meadows, A. Mitchell, J. Motter, H. Mzumara, A. Opsahl, J. Orr, L. Ruch, M. Rust, S. Scott, J. Sundt, M. Urtel, J. Watson, S. Weeden

1. **Welcome and Review/Approval of Minutes** – Jennifer Lee, President of PRAC
   - Minutes approved unanimously as circulated.

2. **Present PRAC Grant Proposals** -- Linda Houser
   - The Assessment Grants sub-committee reports that three grant proposals were submitted recently: one from the School of Law, one from the School of Nursing, and one from the School of Health Sciences. The sub-committee decided to fund the proposal from Nursing and to provide feedback to the other two so that they can be resubmitted. A vote was taken to approve the recommendation that the School of Nursing proposal be funded. The recommendation was unanimously approved.

3. **Promising Practices in Assessment:** "Using the Honors Contract to Facilitate In-Class Active Learning and Peer Mentoring" – Karen Alfrey, School of Engineering and Technology
   - The report covered an intervention tried in Biomedical Engineering course BME 331, Biosignals and Systems. The course is considered challenging for students. For example, transfers find engaging with others difficult because students who have been here get to know each other so well. The intervention tried involved working with students on interacting in class based on short assignments. In addition, honors students were employed to be peer leaders, and a master's degree student was hired to guide the peer leaders.
   - Method of the study: The instructor assigned individual students to six teams of 4. Peer leaders were assigned to each group and discussions took place within the groups. Measures included peer leader written reports on observations and suggestions; class observations; student evaluation feedback; and tracking of grades.
   - Results: Observations showed most of the class was engaged; preparation by the honors students for each class prompted the other students to be prepared as well; student feedback was positive: 71% reported on evaluations that the environment was a strong motivator; final exam grades were better, overall course grades were better, and rates improved; the master's student reported that the honors peer leaders engaged with each other in a comfortable manner, but they did not appear to see the master's student as a resource.

- Additional comments from committee members: In follow-up studies, make sure the sample size is large enough to permit the use of statistics to assess differences between groups (N = 50 or N = 100 was suggested); pilot this at the sophomore level to see what results; track how the students do in subsequent courses to see if this aligns with the positive results; make sure to distinguish between mathematical answers and answers from more open-ended questions (to create generalizability).

4. **PRAC Grant Report:** "Creating a Peer Review Model for Online Courses to Ensure Program Effectiveness" – Margaret Ryznar, Yvonne Dutton, and Max Huffman of the IU School of Law at IUPUI.
   - The grant funded a study based on using online courses in the School of Law.
   - Method of the study: The Quality Matters rubric was used because it focuses on the design of a course; a peer review system was adopted for the online course being studied based on the practice for the face-to-face courses; Center from Teaching and Learning staff helped with the design.
   - Results: Using the Quality Matters rubric proved successful; additional follow up will include data collection from focus groups and a student outcomes achievement questionnaire.
   - Based on questions from committee members, the investigators report that applying the approach in large classes is difficult, but having larger class sizes provides advantages; learning outcomes were prepared and students were confronted with questions without easy answers; in general, the learning was better, and anecdotally online students appear to outperform face-to-face students; peer review is asynchronous, with most of the faculty peer feedback occurring before the course begins; models of live peer feedback are being worked on; students do get to choose whether to take courses face-to-face or online, so self-selection may be factor in the results; innovations in online instruction are affecting decisions for face-to-face courses; the technology used included Canvas and screen capture software.

5. **Discussion and Questions/Answers about BLUE Student Course Evaluations** – Howard Mzumara and Kent Stoelting of the Testing Center (and the members of PRAC)
   - The discussion began with an overview by Mzumara: Adopting Blue is a collaboration for the campus; the overall response rate for those schools using Blue last fall was 51% (the low was SPEA at 41%, and the high was Liberal Arts at 56%). The national average for online evaluation participation is 55%.
   - Best practices tips were then discussed. These include: take students to a computer lab to complete the evaluation, but the instructor should not be present in the room when the evaluations are completed as with paper evaluations; laptops can be passed out in class; incentives can be provided to students (some faculty have reported adding a small number of points to overall grades for the class reaching a certain level of participation, which harnesses the power of peer pressure); encourage students on multiple occasions during the time the evaluations are available, both in class and online (email and course announcements).
   - Online resources were identified. (See attached PowerPoint.)
   - Questions and concerns raised:

o Students who have quit coming to a course can participate only if they have not been removed from a class roster: should this affect the outcome? Answer: Blue can display a class roster and track who has completed or not completed an evaluation, but the ethics of this are a challenge; one enhancement in Blue is a feature that allows students to "opt in" or "opt out" to indicate whether they will respond or not; and this feature could be used to ask a system administrator to delete or exclude incomplete evaluations from certain students from the total count used in creating course/instructor evaluation reports;

o Can students submit an evaluation without filling anything out? Response: An adaption might be to make each survey item mandatory and require a response for each item in order to lead students to complete the form fully before they can submit.

o Is it possible to turn certain response rate monitoring features of the Blue system on or off? Answer: Enabling the student roster to be displayed in Blue is an all or nothing functionality, so agreement across the board is needed.

o How is confidentiality maintained in the system? Answer: The system produces "confidential" and "anonymous" responses (and maintains restricted access to faculty and administrators); however, only a system administrator can locate individual responses, but not individual faculty; and the feature to access individual response data is turned off for individual units and schools.

o Different number of response options as well as directionality of Likert scales occur across the campus, so will standardization occur? Answer: This depends upon faculty and administrators from across the university agreeing on the directionality of Likert scale items on course/instructor evaluation surveys. (A quick poll was taken among the group to see what the preference might be. A majority of faculty preferred to position the "positive" or "favorable" response options to the right of the Likert scale.)

o What will happen when students try to read and interpret the Likert scales with varying directionality on surveys? Answer: Confusion is a possibility; guidance notes to alert respondents within the system can be and actually have been added; faculty and course evaluation administrators would need to decide on the directionality of the scales.

6. **Announcements** – Jennifer Lee (and all)
   - The Liberal Educations and America's Promise (LEAP) conference will occur on February 26. Lee encouraged members to attend.

7. **Adjournment** – motion offered, seconded; adjournment occurred at 2:45.

Future PRAC Meeting Dates:

Thursday, March 10, 1:15-2:45 in University Hall 1006

Thursday, April 14, 1:15-2:45 in University Hall 1006

Thursday, May 19, 1:15-2:45 in CE 307