University Assessment Steering Committee
Summary Note #65
November 16, 2009

Attending: Patrick Benton, chair (Aviation), Judah Ari-Gur (CEAS), Kathy Cummings (EDUC), Laura Darrah (DOSA), Brad Dennis (University Libraries), Marianne DiPierrro (Grad College), Marcia Fetters (COGE), Lyn Foulk (CFA), Kevin Knutson (CAS), Deb Newson (EUP), Dave Reinhold (APAUS), Lynnae Stankus (DOSA), Karen Stokes (ex-officio, TracDat), David Tannor (Grad College)

Guest: John Jellies (University Senate)

Procedural Items:

Benton called the meeting to order. He recommended that we retain the numbering system used in the past, making this meeting #65. Summary notes 63 and 64 were approved (Knutson/Reinhold, Stokes/Fetters). Benton introduced John Jellies, President of the University Senate.

Jellies provided a brief background on the university senate and clarified that the Senate is charged with oversight of "all activities related to faculty." He indicated that the UASC is a parallel committee, established by the university administration to assure broad representation (faculty, professional staff, and students). Jellies asked for a definition of "assessment" as used within UASC. Cummings suggested that assessment involves the establishment of student learning outcomes, the implementation of measurements of student performance related to those outcomes, and efforts to use the information for program improvement.

Discussion included comments about the history of assessment at WMU and the difficulties in developing trust between faculty and administration following the graduate program review. It was noted that the process for review of programs was widely accepted, but the resulting decisions were problematic. It was also noted that assessment is not new. Rather, we are attempting to formalize processes that have been in place in most programs and documenting the results of those processes.

Jellies suggested that a more formalized relationship between UASC and the Senate could provide more awareness and engagement of faculty in the work of assessment. He further suggested that relating UASC to the Senate may add "importance" to the work of UASC. The group discussed various structures to link the UASC and Senate, including ad hoc committees, councils, and standing committees. Jellies noted that membership rules of the Senate would apply to the UASC if it were to become a part of the Senate structure. Jellies will share our discussion with the Senate's Executive Board.

Information was provided about the Unit Assessment Award. Nominations should be submitted by January 15th. Ari-Gur added language to the announcement to clarify that nominations should address the criteria listed in the announcement. The change was approved (Darrah/Knutson). Stokes will post the information to the Assessment website and will include it in the newsletter.

Benton asked whether the UASC should meet in December. It was noted that the January meeting date is the 25th. The group agreed to meet in December to address the data usage policy.

Cummings described some ideas for providing feedback to the deans on the annual assessment reports. The subcommittee charged with developing a process has suggested a series of meetings with the deans or associate deans to discuss the reports and provide some suggestions for future work. The subcommittee also recommended a standard set of categories to be addressed annually by each dean, with room for adapting the reports to meet the specific work of the college.

The brainstormed list from October was discussed. It was noted that some units on the list have degree programs while others are not “academic” units. It was suggested that the UASC approach each of the degree-granting units to request an assessment plan from them. The “non-academic” units should also be contacted for the purpose of discussing whether an assessment plan was appropriate for their missions.

The meeting was adjourned. (Fetters/Knutson)