Educational Effectiveness Review Task Force

Notes from 3/27/08

Discussion of necessary tasks and timelines for the coming year:

1. Develop outline of report, including slots for existing effectiveness work and data from professional and other program reviews, based on interpolating learning outcomes from six principles/general education rubrics (see attached) into the four themes/chapters structure of the report (end of May, 2008).
2. Inform departments of need to preserve sufficient samples of digital copies of student work, especially capstone projects, for evaluation beyond their own accreditations (May, 2008).
3. Ask responsible parties (Arch, Bus, MCD, ITS, IETL, OSD) to plug-in relevant parts of their reviews into EER report framework; utilize “Framework for Evaluating Educational Effectiveness” (WASC document “Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Educational Effectiveness: A Guide for Institutions and Teams,” pg. 4; see attached) for departmental reporting; review by task force co-chairs (July, 2008).
4. Purchase and set up data management system to collect aligned learning outcomes and program review standards, indirect (survey) and direct (student work) data, analyses of such evidence and records of decisions and program changes created in response (July, 2008).
5. Introduce educational effectiveness/general education projects at faculty workshop (August, 2008).
7. Use year of innovation and creativity to structure assessment research for educational effectiveness review (Jan, 2009).
11. Submit report (June, 2009).
12. Site visit (Oct 2009).
Outline of Educational Effectiveness Report

Introduction: A Description of our Approach to Educational Effectiveness

This section, according to the WASC handbook, presents an “inventory of the scope and effectiveness of [Woodbury’s] quality assurance processes for maintaining and improving educational quality.” The introduction “broadly describe[s]: a) the design and approaches [we take] to assure quality in teaching and learning; b) the kinds of evidence of learning [we] collect; and c) the way in which such evidence is used to support further inquiry and improvement.” It discusses the organization of the report, the issues we raise, the evaluations and assessments undertaken, and the solutions proposed and carried out.

The body of the report engages “the issue of Educational Effectiveness in depth... [moving] well beyond description of activities to analysis of evidence, reflections on how well [our] quality assurance processes are working, and ways that those processes have led to further improvement that can be used by the institution.” The report provides “an occasion for engagement of [our] constituencies, especially [our] faculty... [leading] to specific recommendations for improvement... [based on] evidence of educational results and student learning.
Chapter/Theme One: Identity

This section discusses the evolution of Woodbury’s institutional purpose and identity around the six principles: academic quality, communication, transdisciplinarity, innovation and creativity, social responsibility, and the integrated student, as learning objectives. It shows how our program level educational learning objectives (embodied in program review) relate to our institutional purpose and identity (the six principles) and how information regarding indicators of effectiveness and measures of diversity are developed, shared and utilized. It presents evidence of on-going assessment and the use of intentional inquiry and purposeful data collection for effective decision making and improvement, including the development and collection of the Master Academic Plan, departmental program reviews, and professional accreditations. Essentially, we present here what we aspire to, what we already know (and still need to know) about our students and ourselves, as well as the structure of a centralized, digital archival depository and organizing infrastructure that assists in this endeavor.

The questions we will address include the following:

1.1 What are we looking for in terms of educational outcomes?
1.2 How do the basic values and outcomes of the six principles, as expressed in the holistic rubric developed for assessment of general education outcomes (see attached), find expression in individual programs and their attendant courses?
1.3 What do we expect students to learn, both in general and in specific programs, in outcomes that transcend all programs and that reside in individual majors?
1.4 How do we go about finding this, on institutional, programmatic, and course levels?
1.5 What kind of data do we have across the institution and in programs?
1.6 How thorough, both as indirect and direct data, is this resource?
1.7 How robust are our program reviews, both in design and execution and do we use the appropriate methodologies within them?
Chapter/Theme Two: Alignment

This section discusses the institutional alignment of outcomes at the institutional, program and course level with the process of strategic and budgetary planning and the allocation of resources. It details the construction and development of the Master Academic Plan under the Faculty Senate and the Educational Planning Committee and its alignment with the university’s strategic planning, educational learning outcomes assessment and the campus master plan. It demonstrates how the university develops and applies organizational resources and structure for sustainability, including the appropriate alignment and integrity of resource commitments as well as the manifestation of the results of planning in the creation of learning environments. It lays out how budgetary allocations match needs revealed by assessment and the needs of assessment itself and how the relationship between and alignment among planning, budgeting, and resource allocation is driven by student learning outcomes and assessment. In effect, this section represents an assessment of the alignment of assessments with institutional planning.

The questions we will address include the following:

2.1 How do the university’s educational outcomes (the six principles) reveal themselves in planning?
2.2 In what ways do our leadership, resources, expertise and processes reflect these principles?
2.3 Are these principles, the plans derived from them, and the resources thereby allocated insufficient, sufficient, or excessive?
2.4 How do we know this, based on what evidence?
2.5 Is our planning and the alignment of programs and resources informed by educational evidence and how is this documented?
2.6 How are we communicating our processes and results to the community, both in terms of providing information and soliciting feedback?
2.7 How are we involving stakeholders (students, staff, faculty, alumni, employers, practitioners, etc.) in our review of effectiveness, in planning and resource allocation?
Chapter/Theme Three: Success

This section discusses the development of the vision of student success embodied in the six principles and the work of the Student Success Task Force (SSTF), including curricular and co-curricular data gathering to create holistic information concerning the preparation of students for entry, a review of progress at mid-course, evaluation of work in capstones at the time of graduation, and the varied roads to success expressed in alumni career paths. It shows how students are achieving the educational learning objectives of the university through data and evidence collected from academic and co-curricular program review, national and institutional surveys, and external, professional evaluations. It documents faculty ownership and discussion of academic standards at the institutional, program and course level, rooted in the six principles, as well as faculty ownership and discussion of the measures, means and methods of evaluating and documenting student achievement and success. It includes a focused inquiry on the general education program in relation to the six principles, on major programs in relation to the principle of innovation and creativity, and the plan for future inquiries based on annual investigations of other individual principles, looking at assessment efforts that go beyond the immediate short-term purposes of this review.

The questions we will address include the following:

3.1 What are our students learning (cognitively, socially, professionally, etc.)? How well (thoroughly, effectively, complexly, transferably) are they learning it?
3.2 What role do professional and personal development programs play in student learning?
3.3 What is the impact of the general education program on student learning?
3.4 In light of the six principles, is the general education of students something ‘purposeful, substantial and effective’ and in line with our identity and mission?
3.5 What is our evidence for this learning? What kind of direct evidence do we have, as compared to indirect? What are students able to do successfully with this learning?
3.6 What are the results when we ask similar questions about faculty, including faculty development programs?
3.7 What about university staff learning and success?
3.8 Are we able to parse this success across demographic data lines, including transfer status, ethnicity, age, time at Woodbury, or other variables? Are these differences significant?
Chapter/Theme Four: Effectiveness

This section discusses instructional effectiveness, how program reviews are aligned to institutional learning objectives, and how faculty development is aimed at using evidence to reform programs, create pedagogical innovation and effectively use assessment methodologies. It will demonstrate that the university is an organization committed to learning and improvement, that leadership engagement exists at all levels, and that quality assurance and improvement systems are in place so that the university is continuously learning about learning and remaking itself as a learning organization. It demonstrates that organizational learning, both by faculty and staff, takes place that relates to creating a culture of learning. Relying in part on the record of assessment in the Institute for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, as well as the faculty development program and the Institute of Transdisciplinary Studies, it documents the continuing development of pedagogical knowledge across campus, the integration of course-, program-, and university-level learning outcomes, and the systematic and regular improvement of learning.

The questions we will address include the following:

4.1 Given the evidence in the previous chapter/theme, what do we do with this knowledge of our students’ learning? In other words, how do we close the loop from goals and outcomes to data collection and evidence production to interpretation and use?
4.2 How does this process lead to reformed goals and outcomes and a renewal of the cycle?
4.3 How do we use it to reform and improve our teaching, our programs, and our university?
4.4 How do we use this evidence to direct faculty development, program review, accreditation efforts and co-curricular programs?
4.5 What have we done concretely to improve our teaching and thus student learning?
4.6 How are we sustaining a continual discussion across the campus concerning student learning?
Appendix: Supporting Evidence

The appendix, the elaboration and revision of the digital institutional portfolio developed for the Capacity and Performance Review presents “additional evidence and exhibits that support [our] analysis of Educational Effectiveness and student learning.” Included are “an updated table listing current assessment activities… selected results of assessment studies, results of any summative learning measures deemed important by the institution (e.g., pass rates for licensure examinations, capstone courses, etc.), surveys of graduates and current students, and employer feedback on former student performance,” organized according to the chapters outlined above.

Conclusion: Integration

This final section “synthesizes and integrates the discrete elements of [our] Educational Effectiveness Self Review and the impact of the entire sequential accreditation review process.” It moves “beyond the separate topics for review, and ask[s]: Were there common themes or issues that emerged? What was learned from the internal review process, and what major recommendations emerged? Were the goals and outcomes established in the Proposal achieved? What will be the next steps taken to address the major recommendations of the internal review process, and how will momentum be sustained?

Complied and written by DJ Cremer
March 31, 2008

All quotations from the WASC 2001 Handbook of Accreditation