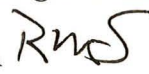


MEMORANDUM

To: Assessment Oversight Committee c/o Dr. Stephanie Kolitsch

From: Robert M. Smith 

Date: July 7, 2016

Please accept my grateful appreciation for the work the committee has done in addressing issues related to our institutional commitment to continuous improvement. Your findings in the list of institutional strengths are not only encouraging but lift our spirits. The engagement of the campus from both instructional and non-instructional personnel is where we had hoped we would be at this point in our transformation. The foundation we build from these commitments will serve us well.

I appreciate the concerns you've raised, and, although I do not agree entirely with the list, I believe these findings can and should be addressed. I will frame my views in response to your recommendations.

1. Training in the assessment process should be the top priority.

I fully agree and also agree that we are at a stage where a mixture of external assessment workshops complementing on-campus training is a good plan to grow our expertise, while assuring the foundational skills are evenly distributed across the entire employee base. I would add that each vice chancellor should establish a protocol for collecting a log of the training by individual as part of the employee's portfolio for us to know the extent of our training efforts and to identify gaps in responses to training.

I am asking the Provost's office to develop, with any group you feel appropriate, a plan for setting levels of training opportunities needed (building on your suggestions) and to establish a budget to effectively execute the plan as an annual commitment.

2. Each unit/department should identify one person to coordinate data collection and analysis and to communicate assessment and data collection deadlines to others.

Agreed. I am asking each vice chancellor to determine for their division the best way to implement this recommendation and to report back to you and to me by September 2, 2016. As the vice chancellors consider their implementation of your recommendation, some consideration to workload demands needs to be included in the decision as well as the extent of data and source of data. I suggest we use the calendar of assessment activities to drive the timetable for data collection, reporting, and refining of processes.

I believe we need to consider an additional step in this delegation. Some plan for assuring the training of these delegates needs to be developed within each division as well as a well-defined

description of the duties. You may want to consider what expectations you would prefer for defining the description so that we have both uniformity and accountability.

3. Create individual assessment handbooks corresponding to each of the five institutional effectiveness areas.

Agreed. One important task, moving forward, is a protocol for answering your concerns that we are able to sustain the momentum we have established at a manageable level and that we embed accountability into our systems that assure our commitment to continue the cycle of continuous improvement year after year after year. I would welcome the committee's recommendations for how we would create the handbooks as well as other ideas for guaranteeing sustainability of our processes.

I believe the calendar of activities serves as a guide for those activities necessary to assure continuous assessment and growth. However, accountability has to be found within any process. My recommendation for your consideration is that the Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, whose responsibilities include accreditation and program review, be responsible for monitoring attention to the calendar and reporting quarterly to you findings of compliance and noncompliance for both academic and nonacademic units. This task is not as daunting as it might seem as there are key moments in the calendar of activities where reports and decisions are made by units, and those activities could serve as a signal of whether units are maintaining their momentum or not.

4. For academic units, create a Faculty Senate Assessment Committee to provide faculty oversight of the assessment process.

As I understand your recommendation, this would be a faculty committee for the academic units whose work would flow to you as the institutional review committee. Given that view of the structure, I am reluctant to create yet another committee within the Faculty Senate because of the increasing committee burdens on Senators. I do understand the importance of having the additional faculty oversight. Second, and thinking ahead, we should anticipate that the general education program, which would be part of this committee's oversight, will be an overall standard of institutional effectiveness in the next iteration of SACSCOC standards.

Therefore, I would recommend that the Faculty Senate appoint faculty to this new oversight committee without requiring membership from the Faculty Senate. To assure continued engagement with the administration, I would further recommend the Chancellor confirm the committee membership. My intent is to assure our culture of assessment represents our strength in shared governance, and having both the Senate and the Chancellor agree on membership, reinforces that value and also preserves an institutional view. I know this is a slight departure from our past but believe we should reinforce that institutional effectiveness is a joint responsibility.

To preserve our established committee hierarchical structure, I believe the committee should reside below the Assessment Coordination Committee on Education Programs and Student Learning. I'd like to see Dr. Seng, Assessment and Accreditation, serve on the committee to

assure compliance. The Assessment Coordinator (Ms. Flowers) would assist through her role to facilitate work between the academic units and this faculty committee. Your thoughts?

Additional responses:

You have also recommended that assessment report forms be kept standard for at least one cycle, and I agree.

You believe the Assessment Coordination Committees should meet a minimum of once per semester, and I concur.

You support the Assessment Newsletters to be continued on a regular basis after the SACSCOC decision, and I agree. I would add that the newsletter should continue to highlight best practices to share within the university community for us to celebrate as well as learn.

I would recommend one step further with the university sponsoring an assessment day on campus where departments and units, using poster formats, would share their best ideas for continuous improvement. The Chancellor's Office is willing to commit \$5,000 to award "best in show" with a \$2,500 first place, \$1,500 second place, and \$1,000 third place to the unit or department selected. I would welcome your design of the program and method for determining recognitions if you find this an acceptable idea.

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