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16 November 2009

Dear WASC Steering Committee Members:

At our most recent Steering Committee meeting, the Administrative Subcommittee was tasked with developing the Analysis of Educational Effectiveness portion of our Educational Effectiveness Review (EER) report.[1]

To focus this key component of the EER, the Subcommittee is proposing to engage in a comprehensive review of assessment at UC Merced with the goals of

- Describing the scope of assessment practices across the campus (e.g., identifying which programs and units are at each stage --- nothing initiated; plan drafted; date scheduled; etc.);
- Evaluating the quality of current assessment practices and processes;
- Examining what assessment results reveal about student learning;
- Using the data and evidence collected to identify the resources needed to sustain and improve assessment practices and student learning across the institution.

This approach serves three important purposes. First, it ensures that our institutional efforts align with WASC's expectations for a Comprehensive/Standards-Based report[2]. Second, as resourcing the new assessment requirements is a campus priority, this approach meets WASC's expectation that the EER "Explore topics or themes that are related to the institution's own priorities and needs, with special emphasis on the assessment and improvement of student learning and

[1] The Analysis of Educational Effectiveness piece is one of eight, inter-related and required elements of the EER Report. The Administrative Subcommittee has also been tasked with drafting the Description of our Educational Effectiveness Approach and the Integrative Component (i.e. the introduction and conclusion of the report, respectively). Subcommittees are being developed to address the Analysis of the Effectiveness of the Program Review Process and Further Development of Student Success Efforts. The newly formed Senate-Administrative Committee for Assessment will develop the Plan for Sustaining Assessment for 5 to 7 years after the EER. Authorship of the Response to the CPR Recommendations remains to be determined. The eighth piece is an Institutional Data Portfolio composed of the evidence analyzed in support of each of the report's elements.

[2] The WASC *Handbook of Accreditation* describes the Comprehensive Approach to the EER as "Organized primarily around Standards 2 and 4, the institution produces a single comprehensive document describing how it investigates and assures educational quality. This report may include a comprehensive review of assessment at the institution, a comprehensive review of how the institution can become more learning centered, or an extensive review of the entire institution, under specific points of inquiry. Through any of these approaches, the institution is expected to include evidence-based discussions of student learning. "

development of a culture of organizational learning and improvement."[1] Third, by generating evidence of our campus' current levels of development relative to our assessment and student learning goals, it supports preparation of the newly required component of the EER report, an institutional plan for sustaining assessment of learning outcomes for the next five to seven years[2].

Significantly, this work may also have UC system-wide relevance. The UC Undergraduate Educational Effectiveness Task Force recently endorsed a programmatic outcomes-based approach to assessing educational effectiveness. Yet, the resource implications remain to be addressed.

To meet the goals articulated above, the Administrative Subcommittee is proposing a set of specific questions. They are appended for your review.

Before Wednesday, November 25th, please offer any thoughts for revising the proposed plan for this portion of our EER report, including the five guiding questions appended below. Otherwise, no later than November 25th, please confirm your approval of this approach to our Analysis of Educational Effectiveness. Please send all responses to me via Laura Martin at lmartin@ucmerced.edu.

Thank you very much for your thoughtful review of this important next step in our accreditation process.

Sincerely,

Gregg Camfield
Professor and Chair, WASC Steering Committee

[1] WASC *Handbook of Accreditation* 2008, p. 35.
[2] The newly formed Senate-Administrative Committee for Assessment will develop the Plan for Sustaining Assessment for 5 to 7 years after the EER.

GOALS of Educational Effectiveness Analysis

- Describing the scope of assessment practices across the campus (e.g., identifying which programs and units are at each stage --- nothing initiated; plan drafted; date scheduled; etc.);
- Evaluating the quality of current assessment practices and processes;
- Examining what assessment results reveal about student learning;
- Using the data and evidence collected to identify the resources needed to sustain and improve assessment practices and student learning across the institution.

Questions for the Educational Effectiveness Analysis

1) How broadly and successfully are we engaging in assessment across the institution, including the use of assessment results?

- At what stage of assessment is each of our academic programs and administrative units?
- How well do we do assessment relative to how well we would like to do it?
- What factors limit our ability to do assessment well, including resources?
- Based on the evidence, what do we need to do to improve our ability to meet our assessment goals?

2) What are our assessment efforts revealing about the quality of UC Merced student learning relative to expectations at the program and institutional levels? [1] And, how are the results being used?

3) What do the results of our institutional assessments of assessment and student learning suggest about the types of resources UC Merced needs both to improve our ability to assess student learning and to implement assessment-based recommendations for improving student learning (i.e. to act on the results of student learning)?

4) On the basis of this evidence, and looking forward five to seven years, what actions will we take to support improvement in assessment and student learning?

5) How is UC Merced's approach to assessment and institutional learning changing over time? This final question would contextualize our current inquiries in the larger trajectory of the institution by describing the shift in UC Merced's approach to assessment over time.

[1] We also need to carefully consider how to provide evidence of being a learning organization. Relevant questions will likely dovetail directly with the proposed questions.