

LAC Minutes -

Friday, 04/11/2014, CLIMB

Chat time: 12:45-1:15

Meeting: 1:30-3:30

Attendance:

Chris Brooks	X	Jamee Kristen	X	Davina Ramirez	
Kendra Cawley	X	Katie Leonard-Floyd		Linda Reisser	
Sally Earll		Priscilla Loanzon	X	Julie Romey	X
Shirlee Geiger * LAC Chair Emeritus		Christine Manning	X	Lisa Rosenthal	
Sylvia Gray * LAC Chair Emeritus		Michele Marden (Chair)	X	Julianne Sandlin	X
Allison Gross	X	Laura Massey		Torie Scott	X
Anne Haberkern		Scott McBeth	X	Doug Smith	
Wayne Hooke (Vice-Chair)	X	Linda Paulson	X	Susan Wilson (Recorder)	X
Gabe Hunter-Bernstein	X	Amara Perez		Stephanie Yurasits	X
Guest: Marc Goodman					

*Always welcome to attend

ACTION ITEMS

- Notify Kendra (kawley@pcc.edu) if interested in “Quantitative Literacy” training event (all)
- Determine whether discussion of adding student members should go on next agenda (Linda P./Michele)
- Send reminder of next pre-meeting chat and request RSVP (Michele)
- Send Wayne’s diagram to group (Michele)

THE CHAT THAT WASN’T

After a room mix up beyond LAC’s control, this month’s chat was held in the lobby area. Scott was able to cover some of the planned material, but not all.

BUSINESS UPDATES

Timekeeper

Wayne Hooke served as timekeeper.

Intros

The committee again welcomed Marc Goodman who was attending as a guest. During introductions, each member answered the question, “If I had a time machine, would I travel to the past or future?” Afterward, Gabe astutely observed no one said they wanted to go 10 years into the future to see how assessment had turned out.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of March 14 were approved with two changes: The meeting date was added in the header, and a punctuation correction was made in the fourth paragraph on page 2.

Behavior Agreement

The chair briefly reminded members of the behavior agreement. While not called into service very often, it is beneficial nevertheless. She spoke of a facilitator training she attended where ground rules were used to keep the proceedings on track. The trainers shared how the ground rules keep

participants focused, and if the topic is contentious, helps get the meeting back under control. Thanks to Linda Paulson for helping the LAC develop our ground rules!

General Updates

- **EAC/LAC Phase II Workgroup:** Michele said discussion on NWCCU's Standard 4.A.3 and course outcomes continues but has broadened to include core outcomes. Someone asked about the history of the core outcomes, so Kendra gave a brief review. She said the current outcomes date back to the late-1990s, before assessment. In 2007 there was a need to have some minor wording tweaks for the core outcomes. Kendra (who was then Curriculum Committee chair) and Susanne Christopher (who was then Degrees and Certificates chair) brought the minor wording tweaks to the EAC. Some of the EAC members wished to evaluate the core outcomes more thoroughly and the EAC tasked the newly-formed LAC to look more closely at them. However, LAC had other priorities: getting their heads around assessment and what assessment processes made sense for PCC. Now, 7 years later, we know a lot more about assessment. Also, we know more about what is working well and not so well for assessing the core outcomes. It is time to take a closer look at them before embarking on deepening the assessment processes (such as the possibility of updating the mapping level indicators for the matrix or mapping course outcomes to core outcomes).

A member asked if we will be changing our core outcomes, and, if so, what that would mean in terms of the assessment plans submitted last winter. There is no easy answer; we are still in the exploratory stage. Also, we may decide we don't need to change them. If SACs cannot embrace particular core outcomes, it may be time to adopt new (and assessable) ones that reflect and encapsulate current organizational values (or perhaps we need to promote and support SACs assessing the core outcomes that aren't embraced).

We're taking new interest in AAC&U's Essential Learning Outcomes, part of their LEAP campaign (Liberal Education and America's Promise). The 16 essential outcomes are designed to be assessable and come with their own rubrics. Oregon is one of 10 LEAP states, which means it is part of a network championing assessment-driven change regionally and nationally. LEAP was first adopted by the OUS, but the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) will replace OUS on July 1 and will include community colleges. It makes sense to take a closer look at the Essential Learning Outcomes as a part of an evaluation of the core outcomes.

AAC&U held a conference around General Education assessment in February. Some colleges are moving away from the "candy box" approach to Gen Ed in favor of a program with structure and built-in assessment. As we think about where to make our assessment more intentional, it seems the Gen Ed list is a good place to start. There are a number of criteria for getting on the list and they are a bit antiquated. Crafting a Gen Ed program around core outcomes with well-developed assessment could result in a more robust academic experience for students.

- **Future Meetings & Events**

The EAC/LAC leaders decided not to hold a combined retreat this year. The chair polled the group as to their wishes for having one or two more LAC-only meetings before classes end. She noted that May 30 has been taken off the calendar as a possible meeting date due to a special training event taking place (details below). Three meeting options were put to a vote:

Option 1: Have one last meeting, an LAC retreat, on May 9. (3 votes)

Option 2: Have two regular meetings, the first May 9 and a second TBA. (0 votes)

Option 3: Have one regular meeting May 9 and an LAC retreat later in May or in June. (6 votes)

The majority selected Option 3, and after a short debate, selected June 6 (10th week of quarter) for a half-day retreat. Lunch will be served.

A run-down of upcoming events, in chronological order:

- ❖ **May 9** – 12:45 to 1:15 (chat), and 1:30 to 3:30 (regular meeting) at CLIMB
- ❖ **May 30** – No LAC meeting or retreat will be held. See below for new opportunity.
- ❖ **May 30 & 31** – Multi-State Collaborative (MSC) Training Event in Portland. Kendra sent communication to faculty and SAC chairs recently about the MSC assessment initiative planned for 2014-15. Anyone who is thinking of participating next year is an ideal candidate for the May training event. Conference planners are bringing AAC&U experts to facilitate. The workshops will focus on designing assignments and rubrics (including norming and scoring). The morning session on Friday will focus on written communication and the afternoon session on quantitative literacy. Despite its label, the latter applies across the disciplines—beyond math and science. This piece will set the stage to see if quantitative literacy is worthy of being a core outcome at PCC. We get to send 10 folks, so if the spots aren't filled by the faculty pool at large, LAC members will have a shot. Stephanie, Marc, Julianne, Wayne, and Jamee expressed an interest in attending. They (and all others) are encouraged to contact Kendra if they are 1) teaching this fall, and 2) intrigued by quantitative literacy.
- ❖ **June 6** – 11:30 to 3:30 (retreat, with lunch; PCC location TBA). This will be a good time to “take our pulse” and dig deep on core outcomes.
- **Completion Investment Council Report**
Council members discussed an article from the Community College Research Center (Teachers College, Columbia University) entitled, “Why Students Do Not Prepare for Math Placement Exams: Student Perspectives” at the last CIC meeting. The article was based on a survey of students enrolled in developmental classes. It describes how math avoidance plays into students’ decisions not to study before placement exams, even when given a list of things to prepare for. Students would rather test cold and risk a lower placement than devote time to brushing up on math concepts.

One of the CIC work groups this year is looking at developmental education. They will take these findings into consideration as they fine-tune PCC’s own materials and devise strategies/actions to increase student success on the placement exams. Their four priorities are:

1. Create clear pathways and transitions for all learners at every stage of their journey at PCC
2. Improve math and pre-college level course achievement and progression
3. Expand faculty and staff professional development that prioritizes learning and student success
4. Improve internal communication and collaboration throughout the organization

Quick Subcommittee Updates

- **Funding:** Priscilla received \$400 from LAC to help defray expenses associated with the 2014 ANNY Conference.

- **Membership:** Two part-time faculty members may not return to the LAC next year, so it's desirable to pinpoint candidates who might fill their spots. Linda P. read a list of names under consideration and the group added department/campus affiliations for most. It would be ideal to increase representation at Rock Creek. The attendance roster was rerouted at this point so members could specify their own plans to stay on the committee next year. Linda said the subcommittee is discussing the merits of having student representation, and, at Michele's urging, may put this on the agenda for LAC-wide discussion in May.
- **Phase II Task Force:** In Sally's absence, the LAC chair said the task force has consulted with Degrees and Certificates and with the Curriculum Committee in their pursuit of opinions on the "out there" focus of assessment.

Recalling the last LAC meeting, Marc asked what came of the conversation surrounding aspirational goals and the possibility of adding a block on the CCOG devoted to them. It hasn't fallen through the cracks and Phase II (the comprehensive group) will likely be taking the discussion to the EAC in May. Gabe, who sits on the task force and on the larger Phase II committee, said the latter has identified this as "low-hanging fruit," meaning we could put it into action quickly if Curriculum and EAC have no issue with it.

- **Templates/Rubrics:** Katie stepped down as chair of this subgroup and Chris has assumed the lead role. They have a draft of the peer review rubric and will finalize it when they see the year-end report template Michele and Wayne are working on.
- **Internal Review:** This group has two projects on the table, though one's in suspended animation according to Wayne. He reported some progress in doing quantitative analysis (QA) of data to support writing outcomes to the "cheesecloth" model. Some of the members were unfamiliar with this concept, so Wayne explained it was an analogy Kendra came up with to describe PCC's approach to covering core outcomes. If you liken a student's accumulated learning to cheesecloth, one holey layer (i.e., one class) doesn't net much, but when you add layer upon layer (depth and breadth from multiple courses) coverage and reinforcement improve. The QA project is well underway, but getting the institution up to speed with AAC&U recommendations is a slower process.

Summer Peer Review

Calling all reviewers! Instructors interested and willing to serve as peer evaluators are sought for the end-of-year review of SAC assessment reports. Last year's process worked fairly well and will likely be replicated. Reviewers will come to campus for a training day, which will include a session on "norming" the rubric. Each peer will be assigned a partner and the two-person teams will read and score approximately 10 reports in July (the volume will depend on the number of reviewers available and the number of reports submitted). The reviews can be completed independently and partners can communicate via email or in person. SAC coaches will be available to provide history and perspective on assessment challenges facing the SACs they are assigned. Ideally, CTE faculty will review reports from CTE SACs and LDC reviewers will evaluate LDC reports, but that also depends on the numbers. Recruiting sufficient CTE reviewers tends to be a challenge. Stay tuned for more information on dates and details.

Next Pre-Meeting Chat

Scott is willing to present in May what he wasn't able to share today due to the room glitch. He would like an audience of 8 to 10, so interested participants will be asked to RSVP before the next meeting. The date is Friday, May 9, 12:45 to 1:15.

DISCUSSION

SAC Assessment Alignment and Academic Freedom

In the LAC assessment class and the training for SAC coaches, Wayne has used a 2D diagram to show how individuals and SACs might approach the issue of aligning assessments to core and course outcomes.

The diagram has two sides: Individual Instructors on the left and Subject Area Committees on the right. On the left side of the diagram (individual instructors) there are three rectangles connected by arrows forming a circle, to show how one connects to the next in a revolving fashion. The rectangles are labeled, "Personal Vision," "Individual Actions," and "Independent Assessments." The left hand side has question marks with the arrows to illustrate that personal vision, individual actions, and independent assessments may not lead to consistent experience for students in different sections of a course. This is problematic in a number of ways (e.g., courses in sequence and transfer courses, to name a few). With this said, it is important to realize that disciplines/programs have different expectations for consistency between sections for different courses. In each of the rectangles there is a dotted oval. The dotted oval represents the right hand side of the diagram where there is "Shared Vision," "Coordinated Actions," and "Shared Assessments" at the SAC level.

The ovals in the rectangles on the left hand side are dotted to indicate that they could be different "sizes" for different courses. Some courses may be mostly shared vision, coordinated actions, and shared assessments with little instructor flexibility. Other courses may have considerably more instructor flexibility. Faculty will need to discuss what is appropriate to support the expected student learning for each course (and, for pre-req courses, what student learning is needed to support student success in post-req courses).

Wayne created this diagram as a way to communicate how a SAC might approach shared vision and shared assessments. Hopefully this diagram will help faculty have meaningful discussion around what elements of a course should be "shared" (and to what degree) and what elements are totally in instructor control. Note: While the word "shared assessments" is used, this does not necessarily mean that the actual assignments need to be identical. For example, there could be several "SAC approved" assignments that support a particular element of the shared vision for a course. It is also possible to have a "shared rubric" to evaluate assignments (such as a common rubric to evaluate essays where the topics are different).

Though inter-department collaboration is desirable when it comes to assessment, Wayne says someone invariably brings up the notion of academic freedom when they are asked to align their assessments with those conducted by colleagues. Sometimes, just being asked to assess is deemed a violation of academic freedom (AF).

Is assessment infringing on AF? Wayne did some research and found the resources to be "horrifyingly vague." In the United States, we still rely on the 'Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure' authored in 1940 by an association of university professors. The statement loosely defines three tenets of AF as follows:

1. "Teachers are entitled to full freedom in research and in the publication of the results, subject to the adequate performance of their other academic duties; but research for pecuniary return should be based upon an understanding with the authorities of the institution."
2. "Teachers are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject, but they should be careful not to introduce into their teaching controversial matter which has no relation to their subject. Limitations of academic freedom because of religious or other aims of the institution should be clearly stated in writing at the time of the appointment."
3. "College and university teachers are citizens, members of a learned profession, and officers of an educational institution. When they speak or write as citizens, they should be free from institutional censorship or discipline, but their special position in the community imposes special obligations. As scholars and educational officers, they should remember that the public may judge their profession and their institution by their utterances. Hence they should at all times be accurate, should exercise appropriate restraint, should show respect for the opinions of others, and should make every effort to indicate that they are not speaking for the institution."¹

¹ [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Academic_freedom]

Things like shared exams, embedded assignments, and required texts are not, in principle, violations of AF. Referring to the diagram, one person commented that SACs can have a shared vision and not have coordinated actions. A faculty member said AF has become a sticky issue for distance learning when it comes to online course shells. If you have a SAC that coordinates efforts, sharing is easy. If a SAC doesn't have that, you end up with every instructor having a different course shell and not wanting to share it. Disagreeing, another instructor said it is legitimate for members of a SAC to have unique shells if their individual approach to teaching is significantly different from their peers.

AF is fundamental but wildly undefined. About the only thing we can agree on, said Wayne, is that AF is not for benefit of the professor, but for the public.

At this juncture, the chair had planned to spend the remaining discussion time developing strategic planning statements, but decided to let the group decide if we should continue with the discussion of Shared Vision/Academic Freedom. The members chose to continue the discussion. Citing its importance to all disciplines, a member asked if the Shared Vision model could be part of the annual SAC process. Each SAC could initially create a vision statement and then review it annually for relevance. It could, Kendra agreed, but it might be problematic for the LDC SACs that don't have a program or sequences where advanced courses build on the content of the beginning ones. A newer LAC member, who belongs to an LDC SAC that doesn't have sequenced courses, said she shared Wayne's diagram with her SAC last fall. They are not opposed to sharing a vision but they would balk at the idea of a homogenous approach to teaching.

Why is it important to have a shared vision? In a brainstorming session that lasted 30 minutes, the group came up with a number of reasons, listed below. Note: The bulleted items are not verbatim statements, but phrases intended to capture the essence of the ideas presented. Where possible, generic examples are given in parentheses.

- Sequences, being prepared (If I teach Course 1XX and students are not prepared for 2XX, there's a problem.)

- Reduces misconceptions about content in prerequisites outside the discipline (If Discipline X requires a prerequisite from Discipline Y, problems surface if Y doesn't include or sufficiently cover the elements deemed necessary for success in X.)
- Avoids people being frustrated with the discipline that owns the prerequisite
- Disciplines could communicate limitations for student learning (For example, learning to write takes longer than one might believe.)
- Would support students building "skills" between disciplines/programs
- Make assessment less scary; it is not a takeover (SACs can focus on what is important.)
- If we had shared vision on writing we could present a unified front and effectively explain our objectives to students when they complain about a heavy writing load
- Expectations for math too!
 - KC said there's a conversation going on about this—what do the different audiences need in terms of writing and computation?
- Create an assessment standard for CTE as students move from one level to the next and prepare for industry certification
- Make our jobs easier and more fun—more collegial!
- Break the silos of the solitary instructors
- Collaboration - how do you do X? (Sharing innovative ways of teaching is encouraged.)
- Collaboration can create shared vision
- Technology to share assignments
- Promotes awareness of each course's role to support learning and meet department/state standards (An instructor cannot change course content without discussing it with the SAC.)
- Helps reduce burnout, strengthens credibility, improves consistency in student experience, and, hopefully, helps with assessment piece (A shared vision that includes sharing of assignments and approaches can be rejuvenating.)
- In departments where course content is 'packaged' and every section covers the same thing, consistency improves and there's greater assurance students will be sufficiently prepared to advance to the next level at any campus with any instructor
- Discussion of problem areas around student learning
- Above scenario also eases the transition for a new or part-time instructor because everything is already laid out, the objectives are clear, and there's less guess work
- In a sense, you achieve "shared" academic freedom (shared at the SAC level)
- Could identify 'weak links' in instruction, which can also be perceived as a negative (If all instructors are using the same materials and they compare student results, an instructor whose students don't perform as well would stand out. It takes courage to self-identify and say, "I see where I need to step up my game and do things differently.")
- SACs that have lots of autonomy can be scary (What if my students suck?)
- If we don't share, we can be cloaked. Need to be courageous.
- Shared vision doesn't necessarily mean everyone has to use the same assignments (This is a frequent misconception.)
- In SACs where faculty autonomy is high, a shared vision can ensure careful attention is given in the course development phase (Everyone benefits from a well-designed product.)
- Some programs/disciplines do have "packaged" material and this works well for them. However, some faculty find the idea of "packaged" material deeply concerning--to the point they would rather not teach. Care needs to be taken that this approach does not work for all programs/disciplines. Wayne's diagram/model allows for flexibility for what is appropriate for the course and supports student learning.
- Even if different instructors use different assignments to present a single concept, shared vision can influence the quality and the outcome

- Students need to care where the information comes from (e.g., informational literacy). This results in a need to be tight on outcome but loose on where it applies in various classes.
- Encourages continuous improvement through experimentation—revealing new and better ways for students to learn
- Promotes professional development when instructors share their unique approaches
- Tells us if students are learning what we think they should know
- Course Outcomes should be the shared vision of the faculty. (Course and program outcomes could be put to the test—if they don't align with a SAC's shared vision, they should be discarded.)
- We need to meet accreditation standards. Shared vision is the first step. Then we have assessment to say we are actually doing what we claim to be doing. (Shared vision represented in the course/degree/certificate outcomes.)
- Would increase the transparency in the transfer of learning (An example was given of the dilemma that occurs in a writing class when you have a paper that puts you to sleep despite its perfect mechanics, vs. the paper that delivers a powerful message but has horrible punctuation and grammar. How does a SAC achieve a shared vision if individual instructors value different things?)

With time running out, the chair brought the session to a close. Several members expressed interest in continuing the discussion among their colleagues, so the chair promised to send a copy of Wayne's diagram via email. If interesting conversations occur at the department level, the faculty can report back to the group at the May meeting.

Adjournment and Reminder

Members were reminded to contact Kendra if they are interested in the Multi-State Collaborative training event scheduled for May 30 and 31. The meeting adjourned at 3:30.