

LAC Minutes – Final

Friday, 12/02/2016, CLIMB 306, 1:00 to 3:00

Attendance:

Voting Members		Voting Members, cont.		Non-Voting Members	
Chris Brooks, Chair	X	Davina Ramirez	X	Kendra Cawley	
Elizabeth Cole		Laura Sanders	X	Sally Earll	
Marc Goodman	X	Julianne Sandlin	X	Anne Haberkern	
Allison Gross	X	Torie Scott	X	Susan Wilson, Recorder	X
Dana Harker		Thomas Songer	X		
Wayne Hooke, Vice-Chair		Nora Stevens	X	Today's Guests	
Jessica Johnson	X	Ann Su	X	Jenny Sasser, Gerontology	X
Hannah Love (on leave Fall 2016)		Catherine Thomas	X		
Charles Pace		Ralf Youtz	X		
Linda Paulson	X				

Note: Minutes are sent to all of the individuals listed above, plus the VP of Academic Affairs, the Director of Institutional Effectiveness, and all past LAC chairs.

ACTION ITEMS

- Part-time members: Give Chris your G-number so he can make sure you are entered into the new electronic pay system.
- Ann: Work with Laura to initiate LAC Book Group through the TLC.
- Linda: Investigate CLIMB room situation.
- Chris: Contact Marc and then IT if the LAC desires a widget at the my.pcc.edu Faculty tab.

BUSINESS UPDATES

Introductions

The members did a round of introductions for the benefit of today's guest, Jenny Sasser (Gerontology).

Announcements

- Part-time Pay. One of Chris's goals for the year was to change the way part-time instructors are compensated for their involvement in LAC, and he was happy to announce a positive change in that regard. First, there are funds to pay the returning adjuncts and the two newest members for attending this year's meetings. Secondly, all of the part-time members will receive additional compensation for LAC work performed *outside* of the regular meetings.
- Recruiting. With the addition of the two recent members, the LAC roster is steadily getting where we want it to be. Because of the funding limitations for part-time members, and because there is a built-in commitment to college service where full-time faculty are concerned, Chris would like to concentrate on recruiting more FT members. The assessment class and the presentations done at September's inservice and at the New Faculty Institute may generate some interest this year or next, but Chris is open to other avenues for recruitment as well.
- Book group. Related to the recruitment piece, Ann suggested that the LAC should consider a book group. These have been pretty successful in other parts of the college, and Ann believes there are many inspiring titles out there that could ignite a whole new cadre of assessment enthusiasts. She will work with Laura, LAC member and co-coordinator of the Sylvania TLC, to get this going.
- Assessment classes. Chris applied for funds to do a short-term assessment class next quarter, and he may do some 'one-offs' as well if the interest is there.
- Meeting venue. When booking next year's meetings, Chris was told CLIMB was no longer available.

He tentatively has scheduled the 2017 meetings at Cascade, and asked what the group thought. Cascade doesn't work for all members, so someone suggested the Downtown Center, which does have rooms that work well for meetings. Linda offered to check with the room coordinator at CLIMB to see if there's any workaround there.

Minutes from Recent Meetings

Taking advantage of the quorum provided by today's excellent attendance, Chris asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the earlier fall meetings. It was moved, seconded, and passed that the October 2016 and November 2016 LAC meeting minutes be approved as presented. (Special note: A few days after this LAC meeting, Susan was searching her spam folder for a student's assignment, and she discovered an email from Chris asking for a vote on the October minutes. This is a good reminder to periodically check one's spam folder for messages that might have gone astray. If you find one, click the box next to it and then click "Not Spam" to train the mail system how to treat future messages of the same vein.)

Subcommittee Updates

- **Templates.** Allison said she created a working document for her subcommittee by taking the current templates and stripping them down to their main themes and regrouping the items therein. Her goal is to use check boxes and short fill-ins (e.g., courses being assessed, population size, etc.), wherever possible, to simplify the process. She had presented the shell to her fellow committee members, and Jessica, Susan, and Ralf gave feedback on the first draft. Allison hasn't decided what to do with the Help Guide or all of the 'how-to' links and examples that are currently embedded in the documents. Chris, Jessica, and Laura have found the Help Guides to be useful, so they encouraged the subcommittee to retain them in some fashion.
- **Outreach.** In follow-up to her suggestion at last month's meeting, Torie created a newsletter mock-up and shared the document with council members in November. She would like to see this become a regular feature, with faculty getting a monthly or quarterly update from the LAC. If we serve up small chunks of "why we do assessment" at intervals, it may ease the transition to a new model of assessment down the road. Ann suggested that the LAC get itself a widget, like the EAC has, under the Faculty tab at my.pcc.edu. Marc said he knows whom to contact if we are interested. Tom couldn't make last month's meeting, when he was installed as the chair of the Outreach committee, but he agrees with Torie's idea for the newsletter. When Tom asked who would take this on, Chris said it was definitely something the chair or vice-chair should produce, and he has this on his to-do list for the winter quarter. To ensure that the next chair keeps the momentum going, Ann asked if the task of publishing the newsletter could be added to the official list of LAC chair duties. Chris said the current by-laws tend to be broad, like "lead outreach efforts," but he sees where more specificity could be useful.
 - **Marketing.** Tom sees a need for doing some old-fashioned marketing and promotion, because he still hears a lot of grumbling whenever he mentions the "A" word. He gave a breakout presentation on learning assessment at the Math SAC meeting, and though it was only lightly attended, he feels we need to replicate such presentations and keep doing them across the board.
- **By-laws.** Chris said he, Linda, and Susan have done a cursory review of the by-laws and have identified the sections that they will be updating this year.

LAC DISCUSSION

Summative Assessment Model (SAM)

In advance of the meeting, Chris had sent members a draft of the Summative Assessment Model he drew up based on the "initial year of inquiry and discussion by the EAC/LAC Integration Team" (ELAIT).

According to the document, the SAM is “a model for gathering summative (‘assessment for accountability’) assessment data addressing the college’s core outcomes.” The why and the how of the model was explained in the draft. At today’s meeting, Chris asked the council for feedback. However, he also asked each contributor to provide an alternative solution if they believe something in the current draft is flawed or undesirable. The 90-minute discussion wasn’t linear, so the main areas of concern are summarized as bullets below, with the various oppositions, questions, and suggestions encapsulated in narrative format below that.

Primary concerns about the SAM draft (in no particular order)

- The assignment of outcomes is wrong
- The outcomes assigned could appear to ‘marginalize’ a SAC or discipline
- It could be tough to reach agreement within and between SACs on rubrics, which outcomes, etc.
- There exists a tug-of-war between practical needs (faculty/college control and accreditation) vs. philosophical issues (authenticity)

Suggestions and ideas for the SAM (in no particular order)

- Categorize by outcomes instead of by discipline (may require a matrix of disciplines or classes matched to outcomes)
- Capture what is already being done/taught by gathering data as to which outcomes SACs already cover (this would inform the outcomes we should have)
- Define the role of self-reporting when measuring a student’s own perception/understanding of outcomes
- Consider ePortfolios as an alternative assessment tool
- Build assessment model/rubric from the start to be authentic
- Make sure model dovetails with Career Pathways
- Is the LAC responsible for professional development?

Summary of general discussion

In the draft, Chris randomly assigned two of the current outcomes to each General Education category (e.g., Communication and Self-Reflection to Arts & Letters, Critical Thinking & Problem Solving and Community & Environmental Responsibility to Social Science, and Communication and Critical Thinking & Problem Solving to Science/Math/Computer Science). They were only intended as examples, but some members thought any ‘assignment’ of outcomes could backfire if certain outcomes were perceived to be more important than others. Enrollments might ‘follow’ the more popular outcomes and other courses (and SACs) could be marginalized. Chris said assigning outcomes wasn’t intended to limit the SACs to only those outcomes—that it merely required one assignment to be aligned with those outcomes. Another member used this opportunity to remind the group that the model assures that all students get all of the core outcomes in their academic trajectory at PCC.

If assigning core outcomes to disciplines is problematic, then why not build a list of all Gen Ed courses and identify the outcomes they satisfy? For example, one biology course might cover Outcomes 1 and 4, while a different biology course might cover Outcomes 1, 2, and 5. Or, a composition class might cover Outcomes 1 and 3, while a literature

course might cover Outcomes 1 and 6. This method would offer students more options. It would, however, have to be easy to understand and somewhat static, because such a system would depend on the advisors being able to guide students through it.

Are we tracking what is already being assessed? If not, is the tail wagging the dog? At this time, we know students can get a degree from PCC without getting all of the outcomes. Any new model would have to ensure that students not only cover all of the outcomes, but that they also are exposed to each of the Gen Ed categories. In other words, if we were to align outcomes to courses, it wouldn't be enough for students to meet all of the outcomes if they could do so by taking courses in only one category, like Arts & Letters. Also, we are stuck with the configuration of the AAOT, because it's a state-owned degree.

We do have the Core Outcomes Mapping Matrices, but the mapping level indicators assigned to each outcome for each course are extremely subjective. What one SAC might consider a 3, could be a 1 elsewhere. It isn't practical or realistic to rely on the matrices for determining which outcomes are covered, so that is one reason the SAM is more appealing—it ensures that certain outcomes would be embedded into every course or discipline, so that students are guaranteed to get them no matter which instructor or campus is involved. The trick is to achieve agreement on what it means to assess this or to assess that. Maybe we don't need 100% agreement, but if we can get a critical mass to agree, then Chris would consider it a success. The fact that we lack a system for consistently covering outcomes and for assessing and tracking students' mastery of them, is a giant gap in our readiness for accreditation.

How are validity and reliability addressed? What keeps rogue faculty from deviating from the norm? Channeling the absent Wayne Hooke, Chris acknowledged that the LEAP VALUE rubrics are not easy to work with and that inter-rater reliability is slippery. If we opt to go with these or other rubrics, we will have to address the unreliability of norming. It is a daunting task, for sure.

One member brought up the 16% graduation rate at PCC and asked how it is calculated. Another commented that her SAC considers the completion agenda part of the current academic zeitgeist, something that has to be addressed, but that they have found a way to hold onto their values and hold onto academic freedom while still embracing the fact that change is necessary. For starters, Chris said there is no desire on the administrators' part to micro-manage this, and while the 16% rate seems low, it is fairly consistent among all community colleges. The campus presidents are very aware that not all students enrolling at PCC intend to get a degree or certificate, so they make allowances for that population. Plus, there are different graduation rates, depending whether you are looking at the students who can complete an associate's degree in two years or three years or five years, etc., or whether you are counting the students who finish in consecutive years versus those who might stop out for a bit but who eventually return and complete their degree. Chris believes the 16% rate reflects those who graduate within three years or so, and the number probably doubles when you look at those who finish in five or six years.

Someone asked if a Career Pathways (CP) model is designed for the advisor or the student. Both. A CP model gets the student from point A to point B as efficiently as

possible. On paper, such a model would guide advisors and students on how to get to graduation by telling them to choose one of these, and one of these, and one of these, etc. Built into the pathway would be the right ‘doses’ of core outcomes, so that no matter what combination of courses one chooses, as long as they took the right number of credits in each category, they would walk away with all of the outcomes. Every SAC is different, so we need a model that speaks to that individuality.

Linda’s SAC (MSD) has been mapping core outcomes to courses for years. The college’s guidelines for what the mapping level indicators represent are at the web page, but they are very general. The MSD SAC has seen a lot of buy-in from faculty because they already teach the material; the course outcomes and the core outcomes speak the same language.

Linda’s example illustrates the importance of capturing what is already being done. One course can cover multiple outcomes simultaneously, so the idea is to look at your courses and ask what you are already doing, and, thus, not reinvent the wheel. This might be somewhat easier for small SACs and unwieldy for the larger ones. For that reason, someone suggested not making any assignments (of outcomes) until we gather the data as to which outcomes the SACs already do. If we discover that only four of the current outcomes are covered, it might be time to ditch the other two. Or, if we discover that the SACs have embraced other outcomes in the last two exploratory years, maybe it is time to adopt those as an institution. One fear, however, is that what’s being assessed might just be the lowest hanging fruit, not the SACs’ strongest suits.

Chris wondered out loud if the institution has ever dissected students’ course work to see which outcomes they likely met and which ones they didn’t meet? Marc suggested that one could write some code, take the existing mapping matrices, and run some transcripts through them to see which outcomes they are hitting.

A member brought up the new self-placement system at PCC and asked if the LAC could use that model? Maybe, before graduation comes around, we could require students to self-reflect on the extent to which they have attained the core outcomes. But, even if we included some meta-cognitive questions like those in the new self-placement system, Chris said self-reporting isn’t the most reliable form of assessment.

Jenny’s SAC has used ePortfolios successfully. Not only are they a good measure of what the students are learning, but they provide feedback as to what the students themselves are finding most valuable. It was mentioned here that many of PCC’s capstone courses use ePortfolios, and other colleges use them, too.

Chris feels that if the end result is something more authentic, he doesn’t care if it means more work on the administrative side. Someone countered that notion saying when it comes to balancing the practical needs with the philosophical, maybe we do not have the luxury of worrying about authenticity now—we just need to get to the task.

Marc shared that he had the opportunity to take an assignment and align it to an MSC rubric. The rubrics are more informative than what’s implied by the mere label of the outcomes they represent—like Quantitative Literacy or Critical Thinking. He found the

exercise wholly useful, because he received constructive feedback about his assignment when he got back the results from the MSC (and internal) raters. As for inter-rater reliability (IRR), even after norming, IRR is terrible.

Nora knows instructors in other states who are having assessment imposed on them in the form of standardized tests. Here, we have the option of coming up with our own system and having some control over our own destiny. Chris reminded the group that the current core outcomes were devised before we had to assess them.

Why can't we trust the faculty to cover the outcomes and accept that a student's passing grade is proof that they have met the course and core outcomes? By imposing LAC assessments, are we doubling-down on SAC-level assessment? How much authority or responsibility does the LAC have? If there is a sense that faculty don't know what the core outcomes are, how can we expect to introduce a whole new system and expect them to get on board? Is the LAC responsible for professional development? If not, who is? When one member suggested that we need a model that a subset of the faculty can understand but that is isn't necessary that 100% understand it, another individual disagreed. This points to the disparities between SACs. In some, there is only a small cadre of faculty who are actively involved in developing pedagogy and facilitating assessment, while in other SACs it's an all-hands-on-deck affair. We need everyone on board; if some are and some aren't, that's a problem.

Until she began coaching, Laura said she didn't realize that CTE SACs approach assessment differently. Not only is there a big divide between CTE and LDC-DE, but there is a chasm between part-time and full-time faculty and how they approach or view assessment.

When Chris brought the meeting to a close, the last couple of comments reverted to the "practical vs. philosophical" dilemma. It will be difficult to balance the needs of the faculty, administration, and accreditors with the desire for authenticity, but Chris has observed that the administration seems to favor the simplest form of assessment because it fits best with what we already do. He has a sense that they are not intent on imposing big-time changes just for the sake of doing so at this juncture.

Adjourn.