

**General Studies/Academic Foundations
Assessment Group Meeting Minutes
February 12, 2008**

Present: Claudia Stanny, CUTLA; Jane Halonen, CAS; John Bratton, Anthropology; M. Karen Prichard, Biology; Tim Royappa, Chemistry; Brendan Kelly, Communication Arts; Judy Young, Composition & English and Foreign Languages; Sharon Simmons, Computer Science; Klaus Meyer-Arendt, Environmental Studies; Matthew Schwartz; Environmental Studies; David Alvis, Government; Jay Clune, History; Franco Fedele, Math & Statistics; Laura Koppes, Psychology; Tom Westcott, Psychology; Ahn Truong, Psychology; Arup Mukherjee, Management

Claudia Stanny opened the meeting by providing attendees with the results of the Academic Foundations syllabus review. The review was designed to determine 1) whether syllabi include the elements identified in the syllabus template posted on the CUTLA web site, 2) whether student learning outcomes for courses align with the 16 program student learning outcomes identified for Academic Foundations, and 3) whether syllabi provide evidence for instructional strategies related to active learning, student engagement, or assignments that entail project management (additional evidence for impact of the Quality Enhancement Plan).

The review was based on a complete sampling of syllabi for all sections of courses offered in Academic Foundations during the Spring 2008 semester. There were 216 sections of courses offered in Academic Foundations in Spring 2008. Of these, 161 sections had syllabi on the web. Claudia Stanny distributed a copy of the rubric used to evaluate the syllabi with percentages recorded for each rubric element that represent the percentage of the 161 posted syllabi that included this syllabus element in the posted syllabus. (A copy of this data summary is included as an attachment.)

The last few rubric elements do not correspond to information that instructors are required to include on a syllabus. These items were included for the evaluation of the impact of the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), which focuses on improving the amount of active learning and student engagement strategies used in courses. The rubric elements provide evidence that instructors have an assignment that entailed project management or instructional strategies that promote student engagement and active learning. In interpreting these data, faculty should keep in mind that instructors may use these strategies in their courses but may not explicitly describe these on their syllabus. Thus, these data may underestimate the amount of active learning and student engagement activities in courses.

The part of the review that addresses the question of the alignment of student learning outcomes in courses with the Academic Foundations was summarized in a matrix analogous to a curriculum map. The SLOs described on the syllabi were examined and judgments were made about whether any of these course SLOs aligned with one of the 16 SLOs for Academic Foundations. These data are based on the 161 syllabi that were posted on the web. The number of syllabi that included an SLO related to each of the 16 Academic Foundation program SLOs is recorded in the matrix.

Jane Halonen was pleased to see the large number of courses with an SLO in the critical thinking section. Claudia Stanny noted that this finding represents a strength in the Academic Foundations curriculum. Clearly, departments are paying attention to developing skills in analysis and evaluation. Tom Westcott expressed concern with the small number of syllabi that included an SLO in the Values and Integrity domain, especially the number of syllabi with an SLO related to Academic Integrity. Although faculty say

that these are critical issues, few courses include an SLO related to this skill on the syllabus. Claudia Stanny pointed out that 106 syllabi included the academic misconduct paragraph. The low numbers of syllabi that include an SLO on Academic Integrity may be based on the assumption that this is implied by this paragraph. Claudia Stanny is going to go through the raw data and identify the 8 courses that include an SLO on Academic Integrity. These instructors may have specific strategies to teach values and integrity in these courses that would be interesting to share with other faculty. Arup Mukherjee believes that most instructors don't think about Academic Integrity as an explicit SLO. There was discussion and the following question was raised: If one instructor teaches academic integrity, should all instructors be teaching it? Claudia Stanny said all instructors need not explicitly teach Academic Integrity or include it as course SLO, but the student misconduct paragraph should appear on all syllabi. Claudia Stanny suggested that for the courses with a significant writing component, instructors might want to discuss including Academic Integrity as an SLO. Jane Halonen said if you have an SLO in your syllabus, you make a commitment to put students through their paces and make some commitment to evaluate students on this skill. She believes this area of values and integrity can be a growth area for distinction for Academic Foundations. Claudia Stanny suggested department faculty discuss this issue and ask if we are doing everything we could be doing in the area of values and integrity.

David Alvis asked how the SLOs in the personal and cultural values category were evaluated. Claudia Stanny explained that the raters looked at the way each SLO was defined in the TIP Sheet that described how each of the Academic Foundations SLOs were defined (the TIP Sheet included 6 or 8 examples of aspects of each SLO). The individuals who reviewed the syllabi used these detailed descriptions of the SLOs to determine if any SLOs for a course were related to any of those components. Before the full review was started, two individuals independently score a sample of 20 syllabi and an inter rater reliability (in terms of percent agreement on scoring the components) was computed. There was a fair amount of disagreement on the scoring of rubric questions related to project management assignments and evidence of active learning and student engagement. For all other questions, inter-rater agreement was 80% or better. When the reliability was not strong, the individuals discussed their criteria for scoring and came to agreement about future scoring. They then rescored the original 20 syllabi and an additional 5 syllabi. Subsequent percent agreements were satisfactory on all elements (with some lingering problems over the student engagement and active learning elements – these should be interpreted with caution).

Claudia has talked to the departments about using this syllabus rubric to look at the alignment of course SLOs with program SLOs in the major. She believes that the judgments about the alignment of course and program SLOs should be done by faculty in the discipline. It is difficult to make these judgments if you are outside the discipline and that is where some of the problems with the reliability of the review come from.

Another area of weakness in this review was the SLO on diversity skills. Consistent with the findings from the syllabus review, when we examine courses that were committed to include embedded assessments last year, there were no courses that make a commitment to assess diversity skills with an embedded assessment.

Claudia stressed that the data from the syllabus review should be understood in the context of the limitations on what instructors choose to include on a syllabus. Still, the review provides information that may be useful for a good discussion about curriculum. Claudia will send each department a summary of the syllabus review for its course syllabi. Departments should share this data with their

faculty and discuss ways to improve student learning in Academic Foundations. The group might want to repeat this analysis in a couple of years to see if changes can be detected.

The second monitoring report for SACS was submitted in the Fall. SACS sent its response letter in January and we are now in good standing with SACS. The second monitoring report satisfied the concerns expressed during the SACS site visit concerning assessment. It's important to keep this process going in a sustainable and creditable way. SACS now requires a 5 year interim report from all institutions. UWF's report will be due in 2 years (2010). This report will consist of the QEP impact report and a mini-compliance report. We have to keep in mind that we can't put aside all we've learned in relation to assessment – after the next report due in 2010, we will be up for accreditation again 5 years later (2015).

Jane Halonen added that today's meeting serves two purposes. First, it is important to have ongoing conversation about student learning and assessment. Second, today's meeting constitutes evidence that the institution cares about General Education and is making use of the assessment evidence collected. The point of the break-out session (next activity of the group) is to learn from others who may be assessing similar student learning, share instructional strategies, and improve student learning over time.

Claudia divided the group into 4 groups based on the 4 Academic Foundations domains (critical thinking, communications, values/integrity, and project management). She asked faculty to share strengths and weaknesses that were identified in student learning in the various domains of Academic Foundations that were assessed in their departments. Each group was given a worksheet on which to identify strengths, weakness, and instructional strategies from their courses that seem to help students learn on these dimensions. The purpose was for each individual to come away with ideas they could share with other faculty.

Results of the break out group discussion:

Academic Foundations Domain - Critical Thinking

Analysis & Evaluation

Strengths Observed in Student Learning

Students appear strong in terms of analysis/evaluation - how does this translate this in class performance

Weaknesses Observed in Student Learning

Distribution of assessment scoring

Exit studies – the department of Government is currently attempting to establish an exit study

Suggestions for Changes in Instructional Strategies to Improve Student Learning

Tom suggested that Chemistry, which was a pretest/posttest assessment, correlate scores for assessment with class

Government is attempting to find a way to measure the totality of a student's learning during major

Plan to evaluate effects of changes implemented

Correlation of grades to courses with assessment scoring

Problem Solving

Strengths Observed in Student Learning

No comments

Weaknesses Observed in Student Learning

Complexity of assessment scoring makes it difficult to implement and monitor

Suggestions for Changes in Instructional Strategies to Improve Student Learning

Questions geared to assessment criteria

This particularly helps in cumulative learning

Plan to evaluate effects of changes implemented

Helps to investigate previously where the problems in learning occur –also regular assessment

Academic Foundations Domain - Communication

Strengths Observed in Student Learning

Public speaking skills training has the advantage of a process driven teaching structure

Weaknesses Observed in Student Learning

Developing clarity

Anticipating flaws in their own argument

Anticipating flaws dealing with counterargument

Suggestions for Changes in Instructional Strategies to Improve Student Learning

Developing more detailed audience analysis component in order to help develop counterargument foresight

Modeling argument behaviors

Plan to evaluate effects of changes implemented

Inclusion of exam style assessment questions on quantitative elements of audience analysis

Academic Foundations Domain – Values/Integrity

Strengths Observed in Student Learning

2/3 of Psychology students exceed expectations on understanding ethics – 90% meets or exceeds criteria

Weaknesses Observed in Student Learning

Plagiarism has persisted in Anthropology, History

Suggestions for Changes in Instructional Strategies to Improve Student Learning

Results dependent on clarity of instructor and narrowness of assessment, as demonstrated by Management and MIS

Over time, cumulative effect of raw data helped Anthropology understand strengths and weaknesses and adjust and fine tune strategies

Management and MIS uses only proctored exams in on line environment and History experimenting with it

Plan to evaluate effects of changes implemented

History is working with instructors to teach citation style and moving assessment back later in the semester

Anthropology and Psychology are still collecting data.

Academic Foundations Domain – Project Management

Strengths Observed in Student Learning

Students have grown up doing group projects

Timeline management and tracking

Heterogeneous groups work better

Weaknesses Observed in Student Learning

Assessment: pre and post survey was not useful

Forming groups (ability to form groups)

Homogenous groups (even among the “high performers”)

Suggestions for Changes in Instructional Strategies to Improve Student Learning

Let groups assemble themselves for project management purposes

Track by group, instead of pre and post test

Incorporating peer-evaluation (points disbursement)

Plan to evaluate effects of changes implemented

No comments

Meeting adjourned at 3:20 P.M.

TO: Chairs of Departments with courses in Academic Foundation

FROM: Claudia Stanny
Director, Center for University Teaching, Learning, and Assessment

SUBJECT: Departmental data from the Academic Foundation Syllabus Review

February 20, 2008

A copy of summary data from the syllabus review project is attached for those courses in Academic Foundations (General Studies) offered by your department. Each heading refers to a specific item in the syllabus review rubric.

The first item provides information about the number of courses offered for Academic Foundations during the Spring 2008 term that had a syllabus posted on the web. If some sections of courses were not posted on the web, data related to these courses appear as "Missing System" counts in the findings reported for subsequent rubric elements. The percent data refer to the percentage of syllabi that were posted that included a specific syllabus element (missing syllabi – those not posted to the web – were not included in this calculation).

The full rubric with summary data for all courses in Academic Foundations was distributed electronically with the minutes for the February 12 meeting.

Thanks again for a great discussion about student learning in Academic Foundations on February 12! I hope you developed some useful ideas for future assessments and good instructional strategies to use in Academic Foundations courses in your department.

**Academic Foundations Syllabus Review
2008 (UPDATED 2/25/2008)**

227 sections of courses in the Academic Foundations curriculum were offered. Syllabi were posted on the web for 172 sections of these courses (76%).

The number of posted syllabi that included a course student learning outcome that aligned with a given Academic Foundation student learning outcome is reported in each cell of the matrix.

Data from 11 sections of the Academic Foundations Seminar were added to matrix (first analysis excluded these sections)

CRITICAL THINKING	COMMUNICATION	VALUES/INTEGRITY	PROJECT MANAGEMENT
Analysis/Evaluation 132	Writing 84	Academic Integrity 19 <i>(106 include academic misconduct paragraph)</i>	Project Skills 66
Problem Solving 79	Speaking 33	Personal/Cultural Values 29	Self-Regulation (deadline skills) 60
Creativity 27	Quantitative Reasoning 59	Ethical Reasoning 17	Team Work Skills 30
Info Literacy 28	Tech/Visual Literacy 37	Diversity Skills 8	Service Learning/ Civic Engagement 8

Syllabus Review for Academic Foundations 2008

Department	
Course	Entries denote the percentage of posted syllabi (74.5% of all AF sections) for which this element was present on the syllabus
College	Total Sections: 216 Number of Syllabi Posted: 161
<input type="checkbox"/> Present <input type="checkbox"/> Not Present	Course Number and Title
<input type="checkbox"/> Present 45.3% <input type="checkbox"/> Not Present	Class Meeting Time and Location
<input type="checkbox"/> Present 90.7% <input type="checkbox"/> Not Present	Instructor Name(s)
<input type="checkbox"/> Present 84.5% <input type="checkbox"/> Not Present	Contact Information (Office number 70.8% , office hours 55.3% , office telephone number 67.1% , e-mail address 83.9% , and/or Web address for course materials 21.1%)
<input type="checkbox"/> Present 98.8% <input type="checkbox"/> Not Present	List of required textbooks
<input type="checkbox"/> Present 84.5% <input type="checkbox"/> Not Present	Course Description
<input type="checkbox"/> Present 77.6% <input type="checkbox"/> Not Present	Student Learning Outcomes
<input type="checkbox"/> Present 65.2% <input type="checkbox"/> Not Present	SLOs written in active language, describing student behaviors or student work that could be directly measured
<input type="checkbox"/> Present <input type="checkbox"/> Not Present	Course SLOs are aligned with program SLOs. (Not all course SLOs must map onto program SLOs). General Studies: SLOs align with course role for Academic Foundations SLOs See Academic Foundations matrix for frequency data for individual SLOS
<input type="checkbox"/> Present 70.8% <input type="checkbox"/> Not Present	General Studies Courses: Syllabus describes an embedded assignment related to outcomes identified for course in Academic Foundations Matrix
AFD SLO Identified:	

<input type="checkbox"/> Present 65.8%	Statement of University policy on academic conduct
<input type="checkbox"/> Not Present	
<input type="checkbox"/> Present 65.2%	Statement about assistance for students with special needs (ADA statement)
<input type="checkbox"/> Not Present	
<input type="checkbox"/> Present 95.7%	Description of evaluation of student work in the course (exams & grading policy): Describe the exams and assignments that will be required. Describe how these will be evaluated and weighted to compute a final grade in the course.
<input type="checkbox"/> Not Present	
<input type="checkbox"/> Present 55.3%	Describe policies for acceptance of late work; permission to make up a missed exam; procedures to request extensions of deadlines or arrange alternate exam dates when conflicts arise with official University functions (e.g., travel for athletes, debate teams, etc.)
<input type="checkbox"/> Not Present	
<input type="checkbox"/> Present 77%	Attendance policy
<input type="checkbox"/> Not Present	
<input type="checkbox"/> Present 62.7%	Expectations for classroom decorum/behavior/civility
<input type="checkbox"/> Not Present	
<input type="checkbox"/> Present 78.9%	Schedule of Required readings, assignments, exams, etc.
<input type="checkbox"/> Not Present	
<input type="checkbox"/> Present 29.2%	Descriptions of specific projects
<input type="checkbox"/> Not Present	
<input type="checkbox"/> Present 6.2%	Grading rubrics for assignments
<input type="checkbox"/> Not Present	
<input type="checkbox"/> Present 49.7%	Evidence for instructional strategies that promote active learning
<input type="checkbox"/> Not Present	
<input type="checkbox"/> Present 49.7%	Evidence for instructional strategies that promote student engagement
<input type="checkbox"/> Not Present	
<input type="checkbox"/> Present 39.1%	Evidence for assignment(s) that entail project management skills
<input type="checkbox"/> Not Present	