

INTER-INSTITUTIONAL
LEARNING OUTCOMES AND ASSESSMENT TASK GROUP
The Pursuit of Excellence in a Culture of Evidence

PRESENTATION TO PROVOSTS' COUNCIL
November 6, 2008

LO&A Task Group Appointed: By the Provosts' Council in February 2008.

Project Goal: To help each campus and the system as a whole develop, interpret, and wisely use direct evidence of cumulative student learning.

Four-point Purpose:

1. Student success in learning performance;
2. Program improvement and institutional effectiveness;
3. Accountability with valid, authentic and clear evidence; and
4. Transparency of results that have meaning for prospective students, parents, others.

Charge with Deliverables and Elements:

1. Identify fundamental learning outcomes and assessment methodologies in current use and guide further development (including potential and appropriate use of standardized tests).
2. Devise effective strategies for faculty involvement, collaboration and information sharing.
3. Identify how other key players and stakeholders will be involved—students, administrators, inter-sector connections (K-12 and community colleges), public leaders.
4. Link this work with accreditation requirements—regional/institutional and professional.
5. Help articulate campus and system positions on accountability and transparency as proposed in national conversations (including Spellings Commission and VSA) and how assessment results will be reported to the campus, Board, state government, and public.
6. Create a guiding framework—institution-specific and shared across the system.
7. Prepare a plan for the work of student learning outcomes statewide—general education and disciplines/professional programs—with a step-by-step process with milestones for implementation of the plan by fall 2010.
8. Contribute to broader knowledge development about learning outcomes and best practices for teaching, learning and assessment.

Progress to Date by Charge:

1. Learning Outcomes and Assessment Methodologies
 - a. Established our LO&A Task Group as a learning community by building strong esprit de corps and collegiality as a foundation for complex, sensitive and productive work dependent on and fostering trust with colleagues on campuses and among partners.

- b. Scanned general education learning outcomes across campuses, recognizing that they are works in progress and respecting differences in campus missions and cultures. Will periodically repeat the scan and update the matrix.
- c. Determined that the AAC&U “Essential Learning Outcomes” represent the best frame of reference as a “starting place;” hence, beginning to map current OUS campus outcomes with ELOs for discussion purposes.
- d. Working to identify commonalities and differences across campuses in the learning outcomes, and setting the stage to select those most important for our focus on assessment methodologies.
- e. Reviewing the lower division General Education outcomes and course criteria developed by faculty (as coordinated by Karen Sprague and Robert Mercer) across the campuses for the JBAC response to SB342, in order that LO&A Task Group can build upon this work with relevant assessment approaches and further the conversations on outcomes for the baccalaureate.
- f. A subcommittee conducted an initial inquiry of all campuses to understand their current work on high impact teaching-learning practices to help students achieve learning outcomes, assessment methods and their processes, use of results of assessments, successes achieved and challenges encountered, influences of accreditation organizations, and models used for campus communications and reporting. The inquiry was conducted through in-person and telephone interviews with key administrators and faculty engaged in this work. Further such inquiries will track campus progress.
- g. An interim overview of perspectives and recommendations was prepared in summer 2008, following the initial campus audit process, *Where We Stand* (Enclosure A)
- h. A subcommittee is examining assessment methods and tools now in national use or emerging from new innovations. The subcommittee is using as a framework and starting point the brochure, *Assessing Undergraduate Student Learning Outcomes: A Snapshot of Current Practices*. (Enclosure B)
- i. The LO&A is engaged in continuous inquiry through the literature, consultation and collaboration with other states deeply engaged in this work through their systems and campuses.

2. Faculty Involvement

- a. Developed a shared understanding that faculty involvement should be sought with respect to their differentiated roles in their programs (discipline and general education assignments), their participation in governance through senate structures, and where applicable their representation in faculty unions.
- b. Developing faculty involvement in ever enlarging circles of colleagues, beginning with the LO&A representatives engaging colleagues on their own campuses, continuing with special events to participate in the statewide work and advance their campus endeavors, expanding to campus-based focus groups and eventually state-wide conferences.
- c. Began engaging and bringing together interested faculty who are already active in the area. The University of Oregon and OUS hosted a Sounding of faculty and academic

- officers from public and private universities and community colleges in Oregon to identify challenges and gather approaches to increase the sophistication, scope, and scale of assessment efforts on campuses.
- d. A team of 10 faculty and assessment professionals participated with colleagues from across the country in a week-long General Education Institute in Minneapolis in June 2008 in intensive sessions exploring OUS work in the context of contemporary practices. Future opportunities include special sessions on assessment at the AAC&U Annual meeting in Seattle (January 2009), General Education Institute in May/June 2009, and possible participation in a new Institute structured for and around the role of disciplines (2010).
 - e. The LO&A Task Group plans to organize a series of campus-based focus group discussions around “accountability” during the spring of 2009, and will hold a statewide conference in the summer of 2010.

3. Other Partners and Stakeholders

- a. Developed a shared understanding about the constituencies and their appropriate engagement based on appropriate authorities and interests.
- b. Took the first steps toward engaging student affairs leadership through the participation of an experienced colleague in assessment (OSU) in the General Education Institute.
- c. Seeking to understand the alignment between LO&A work and that of other OUS enterprises. Examples include the Board’s Committee on Student Participation and Completion and the JBAC work on SB342.
- d. Planning to engage with community college colleagues, drawing those engaged in this work with OUS campuses into a statewide conference.
- e. Learning perspectives of the business community through the AAC&U survey of business leaders regarding outcomes that matter and assessment information of value.
- f. Likely will be invited to ‘host’ one of the *Public and Policy Dialogues in Partner States* (2009-10) in association with AAC&U via an opportunity funded by the Charles Englehart Foundation, thus enabling OUS to bring together leaders from government (state and local), business, nonprofit, postsecondary education, K-12 education, and the public to consider core questions and advances in college student learning in Oregon and the Nation.
- g. Considering how the Oregon Business Summit might be used as a framework for a session on college learning outcomes, best practices and assessment, perhaps in 2010.

4. Accreditation

- a. All of the campuses have reported that regional and certain professional accreditation reviews have accelerated the priority and progress of their work on learning outcomes and assessment methods.
- b. The LO&A Task Group will examine and synthesize key expectations and standards of accreditation organizations on learning outcomes and assessment.

5. Accountability

- a. A subcommittee was established to tackle this question in earnest following upon the LO&A Task Group review of key developments and documents—Spellings Commission report, VSA, and the joint statement of AAC&U and CHEA.
- b. The LO&A asserted the value of beginning with the AAC&U-CHEA statement of principles: *New Leadership for Student Learning and Accountability*. (Enclosure C)

6. A Framework

Elements of a framework were created at the outset to guide the work, e.g. first principles, but drafting a *Framework for the Pursuit of Excellence in a Culture of Evidence* will be the focus in the spring-summer of 2009

7. A Longer-Term Plan with Milestones

This will be the focus of the LO&A Task Group during summer 2009.

8. Contribute to Knowledge Development

The most significant avenue in which the LO&A Task Group is engaging OUS in the larger conversation is through AAC&U's LEAP campaign and specifically the General Education Institutes and the Tri-State Partnership: Giving Students a Compass.

- a. Oregon is a LEAP state
- b. OUS is one of three state systems working on an inter-institutional basis to promote progress in learning outcomes, high impact practices, assessment and the success of all students with special focus on underserved students.
- c. Three campuses will be selected to be "Beta" sites for the Compass project; the other four will be Engaged Sister Campuses.
- d. Compass grant funds are providing helpful support for OUS campus representatives to participate in the national conversations and activities.
- e. AAC&U Annual Meeting and Tri-State Compass sessions—Seattle, January 2009
- f. General Education Institute in Minneapolis in 2008 and 2009

Essential Support

1. Provided Thus Far:
 - a. OUS Chancellor allocated \$30,000 for special initiatives of the Learning Outcomes and Assessment endeavor and assigned three system professionals for the work.
 - b. OUS Chancellor visible and articulate in support of the work at critical junctures, e.g. the Sounding in Eugene, AAC&U Annual Meeting in 2008.
 - c. The Vice Chancellor for Strategic Programs and Planning supports the leadership, technical and operational needs of the Task Force.
 - d. Support of the Provosts' Council with the Task Force Charge and action for OUS to join the AAC&U LEAP campaign and thus engage in a 3-system innovation and inquiry initiative.
 - e. Grant funding through the Tri-State Partnership: Giving Students a Compass. OUS will receive at least \$20,000 over two years for each of three "Compass Beta Campuses" and for systemwide responsibilities (e.g. a statewide conference/institute in summer of 2010).
2. Further Support Needed:
 - a. Increasing visibility of provost and president support and knowledge at the campus and system levels to inspire the Task Force, and an enlarging circle of engaged faculty and administrators to fuel the momentum of the work underway.
 - b. Anticipated but not yet specific needs for investments in infrastructure associated with testing and introduction of emerging assessment methodologies, as well as sound means to incorporate selected findings into systemwide accountability reporting.

Timeline Refinement

LO&A is on schedule with most initial activities and milestones. See revised timeline.
(Enclosure D)

Upcoming Activities

Tentative Outline for OSBHE Report in January 2009

1. A written report for advance reading about the project, background concepts, alliances
2. A brief powerpoint overview
 - a. Learning Outcomes and Assessment Task Force charge
 - b. Key concepts and background
 - c. Progress to date
 - d. Participation in national work, especially Compass and Making Excellence Inclusive

3. A moderated panel of selected LO&A Task Group members providing cogent illustrations of the work in progress on the campus and interinstitutional levels. There will be a rehearsal.
4. Discussion with the Board members
5. Questions:
 - a. Alternative suggestions for structuring the report?
 - b. One or more provost/s participate by any combination of the following:
 - i. Reviewing the report for advanced reading?
 - ii. Delivering the powerpoint overview (prepared with Elisabeth and Ruth)?
 - iii. Attending and being a sounding board for panel rehearsal?
 - iv. Moderating the panel?
 - v. Serving on the panel?

Conference on College Learning and Assessment for Provosts and LO&A Members

November 14, 9:00 a.m.-Noon (Enclosure E to be distributed at meeting)

ENCLOSURES:

- A. *Where We Stand*, interim snapshot of status in summer 2008 following initial campus “audit”
- B. *Assessing Undergraduate Student Learning Outcomes: A Snapshot of Current Practices* (AAC&U), a starting point for subcommittee on assessment methods/tools
- C. *New Leadership for Student Learning and Accountability*, joint statement, AAC&U- CHEA
- D. Revised LO&A Project Timeline
- E. Tentative Outline for November 14 Conference (to be distributed for feedback at meeting)