

Assessment of Student Learning: SLO Plan Feedback and Next Steps

February 8, 2011

Dear Program Coordinators (cc. Department Heads and School Directors),

First, I want to thank you and the other program instructors for making a conscientious effort in submitting a meaningful program-level methodology plan last October 2010 for assessing student learning. My purpose for writing this letter is to give you information on how the “peer-review” teams evaluated your assessment plan, to suggest the next steps to take in your assessment process, and give encouragement as you move your efforts forward in improving the learning experiences for your students.

In this packet of materials you will find the following:

- Peer-Review comments about your methodology plan (with the evaluation rubric attached)
- Directions and draft example on how to write an annual assessment report (**due October 30th, 2011**).
- Excerpts from Walvoord’s book (2010) *Assessment Made Clear and Simple*

The “Peer-Review” Process

A team of peer-reviewers evaluated and commented on methodology plans submitted last fall. This “peer” review group consisted of faculty members from programs across campus. The peer reviewers did not comment on any programs that already have external accreditation oversight. The rubric used by the peer reviewers is the same instrument that was sent to all faculty as a “self-check” guide at the beginning of the Fall 2010 semester. It is important to also understand the spirit in which the peer reviewer’s worked – their comments reflect an intention to help you further clarify your assessment processes and not to criticize your ideas or methods.

Next Steps: Begin with the end in mind and then “take the plunge.”

No matter how rudimentary or refined your assessment plan is, it’s time to just jump right in and start looking at student work and evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of their performance. Once you get started doing this, the process will become more clear to you and it will be easier to articulate the process in writing. I’ve attached a couple of documents to help you. Take the time to read Chapter One and the attached appendices provided from Walvoord’s *Assessment Made Clear and Simple* (2010). Her approaches really are clear and simple and they make good common sense! I believe it will also help your process by keeping

in mind what your annual assessment report needs to include (due at the end of October). I've provided a report template, a program improvement worksheet, a draft example of a report in progress, and a rubric that will be used to evaluate your report by the peer-reviewers.

Be Encouraged:

After looking over all of the submitted assessment plans and reading the peer review team's comments, it is clear we are all at different stages in applying assessment techniques. Also, program assessment is not a well defined art or science – there is no single recommended “best way” to do program assessment. On a national scale, most universities are facing the same challenges we are. Where your program is in this process right now is completely acceptable. We are in this process together as “masters in the making” and perfection is not the goal here, but making a commitment to continuously try our best is. The next step is to take our processes further, and the step after that is to move our processes even farther still. The integrity of program degrees and the learning experiences of students will be better off because of your efforts and intentions.

Support You Can Count On:

My staff and I are passionately committed to assist your efforts in any way that we can.

- I'm currently piloting online assessment systems to help make collecting student scores easier,
- Monthly assessment workshops are scheduled – Feb. 16th, 3:00 PM; March 17th, 1:00pm; and April 6th, 1:00 pm at the Faculty Development Center, room 109 Halle.
- A 3-Day Assessment Institute is being planned – if you are interested, I'd like your feedback on possible days that work for you (see the pink flyer in your packet). An honorarium is available.

Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns regarding the peer-reviewer's comments, the next steps to take in moving your assessment process forward, or any assessment and student learning issues (Peggy.Liggit@emich.edu; 734-487-8288). All assessment documents and many supportive materials and examples can be found at our website: www.tinyurl.com/emuassess.

It is such a pleasure to better understand your academic programs and the rich learning experiences you provide for EMU students.

Kind Regards,

Peggy Liggit, Director of Academic Assessment

P.S. Happy Valentine's Day - enjoy a card and a chocolate!