Minutes from Jan 15 curriculum committee discussion meeting

In attendance: Linda Fergusson-Kolms, Marc Goodman, Pam Kessinger, Dorothy Badri, Nancy Stoutenburg, Jeremy Estrella, Ann Cary, Mike Guthrie, Amy Clubb, Rick Willebrand, Leslie Hackett, Stacey Timmins, Anne Haberkern, Kendra Cawley

Guests: Michele Marden, Gabe Hunter-Bernstein, Scott Morgan

There will be no Course Leaf items to review. This is a Curriculum Committee Discussion Meeting.
Part I
Information items for the Committee (i.e. what goes on behind the scenes that we do not see)
    A. Consent agenda items
    B. Transferability for Gen Ed requests

Linda explains that consent agenda items are informational and not something the committee votes on or recommends; these items are approved internally outside of the committee approval process. The same is said with General Education transferability, which is process where the curriculum office submits requests to the OUS schools and the formal GE request is not presented to the committee until the curriculum office receives responses from at least two OUS schools, one of which accepts our course as general education.

Part II
A. Use of Meeting Technology.
Do we want to consider greater use of technology to encourage for more efficient and sustainable meetings?

Guidelines:
If we adopt a more technology friendly stance on meeting participation, should there be guidelines for participation?

If we decide the idea is worth considering more seriously, do we want to do one meeting with greater technology use as an experiment?

<u>Discussion</u>
The committee as a whole is on board with integrating technology into the meeting structure, with the caveat that there be some guidelines, face-to-face being the preference, but are open to trying ITV and telephone (landline). As a committee, the members felt strongly that they should continue to meet face-to-face.

The committee agreed to do a test run at the May CC meeting; any presenters who may not be able to make the meeting will have the option of doing some remotely. The committee felt strongly that guidelines were needed for presenters to ensure preparedness for questions and discussion. Ann Carey will draft up guidelines and share with the committee over email before the May meeting.

B. Meeting Location for next year (2013/2014)
Options:
    i.   Keep it at downtown center
    ii.   Rotate between campuses like EAC meetings
    iii.   Designate a campus home (SY?, SE?, RC? Cascade? Or even CLIMB?)
    iv.   Investigate the logistics of booking video conference rooms on a standing basis at multiple campuses (see discussion A)

<u>**Discussion:**</u>
The committee needs more representation from the different campuses; the current membership is majority Sylvania with no representative from SE, which could be cause historically the meetings were held at Sylvania. The committee did vote on where the meetings should be held next year, see tally below. DAC and CC will consult on preference and chose a location for next year, keeping in mind the importance of both meetings being held at the same location.

> **Designate Campus home – 6**
> **Downtown Center – 3**
> **Rotating campuses – 0**

*this is only representative of the members present
One more additional email vote for DTC

C. Meeting times for next year (2013/2014)
Options:

> i.   Keep it the same (3:00-5:00 pm) - 6
> ii.   Discuss alternative times

<u>**Discussion**</u>
Committee voted on meeting times, see tally below:
3:00-5:00 pm - 6
2:00-4:00 pm - 2
1:00-3:00 pm – 2
Committee is aware that the 1:00-3:00 pm time slot could be problematic for a lot of instructors and may interfere with their teaching schedules.
*this is only representative of the members present

D. Possible transitions in course outcome language.
What is the new LAC subcommittee discussing this and why?
What does that mean for the Curriculum Committee as we read course outcomes in a possible period of transition?

<u>**Discussion**</u>
(See handout from LAC attached)

The committee discussed grade and outcome disconnect, ability to assess outcomes, and how we should have confidence in our students ability to reach the desired outcomes.

History – When PCC first started doing outcomes, the point was to get faculty to think about their course in terms of 'out there', without requiring them to think about how they might assess them in here - more in line with aspirational outcomes. The process of getting faculty to think 'out there' was helpful in getting faculty to think more broadly about their students and move away from lists of skills as intended outcomes.

Now with the focus on assessment, we need to think about how can we assess our outcomes and be accountable to the public and college at large, based on what we expect from our students. What is a reasonable outcome? Are some aspirational outcomes necessary? Right now is a good opportunity, without judgment, for the committee to see a variety of assessment strategies and get a collective sense of what is a good assessment strategy. We're entering a transition period, where some outcomes may appear to be in here and out there, the committee should be cautious and mindful that we might be leading folks to make changes in language that might make it more difficult to assess later. What is the line between acceptable in here and not acceptable in here?

(See handout for 'new' outcome guidelines) – still in discussion.

E. Collecting initial assessment information.
The subcommittee suggested some language and a procedure. The curriculum committee like the language but when it was brought to other stake-holders and the Phase II sub-committee of the LAC some concerns were raised.

The language the Curriculum committee had proposed to go into CourseLeaf to solicit descriptions of course outcome assessment strategies:

> *"Each of your course outcomes **should** have an assessment strategy that allows you to gather information about what the students have learned and are able to do. In looking at your specific course outcomes, could you share the details for the assessment strategy for one of them?"*

Concerns:
    i.   The word should is very prescriptive at a time when the college is not yet holding SACS accountable for course-level assessment.
    ii.   If a SACs response goes into CourseLeaf it is part of the permanent record and this might cause concern especially if there was the assumption it would be tied in some way to the approval process.
Suggestions from the Phase II meeting:
    i.   Add a statement to explain the language such as:
            "It is an institutional goal to have specific and appropriate assessments attached to each of the course outcomes at some point in the future." (remove at some point in the future.)

    ii.   Still collect information electronically but instead of a box in CourseLeaf maybe a prompt where faculty provides a written description of assessment methods could there be a way to **attach** an optional sample? This would uncouple the assessment issue from the course approval process, but keep the information 'attached' to the course to which it pertains.. Then ask for further examples in the meetings as time allows.
    ~~ii.~~iii.
Discussion
The committee decided that since it is an institutional goal to have course level assessment, the word 'should' is fine. To reduce the concern about assessment strategies being linked to the approval process and to emphasize that this is just a year of inquiry it was suggested that an email message be sent (instead of a link in CourseLeaf) that inviting presenters to be prepared to share their assessment strategies at the meeting if time permits OR by email. Some presenters have been disappointed that they were NOT asked at the meeting to share, so additional language was drafted to emphasize the positive and to try and capture the enthusiasm that instructors have for their courses.

New language proposed
> *"Each of your course outcomes **should** have an assessment strategy that allows you to gather information about what the students have learned and are able to do. In looking at your specific course outcomes could you share the details of a meaningful and/or innovative (or just cool) assessment strategy for one of them.*

F. If time allows: Working with CourseLeaf.
Are there questions?

Tips from power users?
Discussion

The committee would like clarification on how much copy editing to try and do in the meeting.
The suggestion was made to limit time spent on typos that did not affect meaning.
The committee would like the agenda alphabetized to help with readability, as well as the ability to make group comments on a specific request.

User perspective - the ability to see who made which change to a specific request.

The LAC task force has been assigned to: look at our current process for writing course outcomes, especially as they pertain to assessment and consider if that process is working for us now and in the future, or if we should consider implementing a new faculty driven/supported process at the college.

Some background information

A. Current style of writing "out there" outcomes, that is outcomes that state what a student will be able to do in the so-called "real world" after leaving PCC, was adopted during a period well before the expectation of assessing each outcome. "Out there" has been good: It moved us from "classroom objectives" or a list of "100 factoids/competencies" to a "higher purpose" for learning.
B. "Out there" does work for some, but it is time to re-evaluate. One consideration: Has "out there" pushed us to unmeasurable outcomes? Are SACs limited by the "out there" focus (eg, do some SACs feel unable to create meaningful outcomes that represent the intention of the course)? Would it be possible to keep what is good from the "out there" focus, but allow more flexibility?
C. There is a feeling the "out there" focus of course-level outcomes is problematic for addressing NWCCU standard 4.3.A.
D. In the transition period: Given the need for Standard 4.A.3, we need to focus more on the assessability of the outcomes. And while we are in conversation, focus less on the "out there" wording.
E. The EAC/LAC Phase II group has been considering expanding the guidelines about writing course outcomes to be either 1) what the student will be able to do or think "out there" based upon what they learned in class example: Upon successful completion students should be able to . . . .<outcomes>., or 2) focus the outcome on what students have done in class. For an example: Upon successful completion of X, students will have demonstrated the ability to . . . <outcomes>.
F. Should all outcomes represent the expected learning in a course? Where can aspirational goals be identified?
G. Must every student meet every outcome in order to pass the course? If they miss one critical component in multiple assessments (for example, fractions in a lower-level math class) but overall they earn an 80% success rate, can they pass the class?
H. We want to retain control of our faculty driven, faculty supported model of assessment.

The task force recommends the college adopt two options for framing student learning outcomes.

Upon successful completion students should be able to: . . . . outcomes

Or

Upon successful completion of the course, students will have demonstrated the ability to: . . . . <outcomes>.

The task force recommends changing the guidelines for writing outcomes (on the Curriculum Office website)

The goal for this change is two fold: to clarify and expand the format for writing course outcomes, and to more directly set expectations for aligning outcomes to assessment.

Guidelines for Developing and Writing Student Learning Outcomes for Courses

- Following are a series of questions that the Curriculum Committee members will consider when reviewing student learning outcome statements for courses.
- Does it describe what we intend the students will be able to do at the end of the class?
- Does it describe what the students can do based upon what they learned in class?
- Is the statement clear? Does it give a clear sense of the course to faculty and students?
- Is the statement robust (complex) enough to express the essential content (concepts, issues, skills, knowledge) in a way that is informative to students, faculty, and other institutions?
- How will this outcome be assessed? All outcomes must be assessed.

The Task Force recommends adding a field in the CCOG for aspirational goals

Aspirational goals, as opposed to learning outcomes, are important for certain courses to engage learners and set the tone for instruction. They provide guidance to instructors and students as to what the SAC hopes students will get out of the course, but they are not necessarily achievable by every student and may or may not be assessable (e.g., gain an appreciation of ...). A student may pass a course without necessarily meeting the aspirational goals by the time the course ends, nor is there any expectation to assess those goals.

The Task Force recommends modifying the Assessment Strategies field of the CCOG

Set guidelines but don't demand adequate response. Add clarity to this field regarding the proficiency level at which students must meet identified outcomes. Identify in detail the expectations for a passing grade.

Questions for SACs to consider - must students meet every outcome to pass class? There are different ways of looking at this expectation. A SAC might decide that students must adequately meet 4 out of 6 outcomes, or they can determine that students must acquire 6 out of 6 outcomes. What if an essential outcome is not met by the student, such as fractions? Does it mean the student must repeat the course?

Is it a reasonable expectation for that SACs would agree to such standards of expectations? This needs further discussion as such a decision will have a great impact on SACs.