HLC Steering Committee
Minutes
Jan. 20, 2012

9:00 – 10:15
SC 206

Present: Betsy Desy, Corey Butler, Beth Weatherby, Jan Loft, Alan Matzner, Scott Crowell, Doug Simon, Bill Mulso, Chris Hmielewski, Lori Baker, Raphael Onyeghala, Betty Roers

Absent: Dan Baun, Deb Kerkaert, Kathleen Ashe, student representative

Agenda

I.   Information about Linda Suskie (assessment and accreditation consultant) visit on Jan. 26th and brainstorming of questions for her

Linda Suskie is the just-retired vice president for the Middle States Commission on Higher Ed (one of the other regional accrediting bodies like HLC) who is now consulting, and she will be visiting SMSU on Jan. 26th, courtesy of a MnSCU faculty grant that Betsy Desy wrote. The primary focus of her visit is assessment, but we can also ask her for any advice useful for our HLC work (of which clearly assessment is a vital component). She will be meeting with members of the LEC, CIA, and HLC (groups she specifically asked for) at 10:00 and at 2:15, as well as meeting with Pres. Wood and other administrators during the day (Beth will speak with her by phone as she will be at an AACU meeting) and having a session with all faculty at noon.

Betsy asked the group to consider questions that we or our teams might have for Linda. Things that have come up in Betsy and Linda's planning conversations include that the HLC and its focus is different than it was ten years ago in terms of assessment. The expectation will be that we have implemented assessment plans and are closing the loop. HLC reviewers will expect during their visit to campus to stop university community members and speak with them about accreditation and expect them to know what is going on.

This last item led to a discussion of public relations efforts both in the run-up to the actual visit and what could potentially be done in an ongoing, sustainable way through academic pathways, especially in the First Year Seminar, to create awareness of the topics of accreditation and assessing learning. Lori met with Bill and his University Relations team last year and will arrange another meeting before the next Steering Committee meeting. Those going to the HLC conference can go to more of these types of sessions to gather additional ideas. The group discussed PR use of the SMSU folders with the ten LEP objectives listed inside, table tents, a banner campaign, and a prominent web presence. Jan mentioned that work with Strategic Planning might be another avenue in creating focal points for assessment and collection of information.

II.   Team reports
        A. Updates from individual teams

        Team #1 – had a small meeting on Jan. 19th. They have suggested to their team members to
                write a small narrative about why a piece of documentation is meaningful and why
                it was retrieved; this will aid in writing the chapter and not losing sight of why a

piece of documentation was gathered. Other teams should adopt this practice. Christine Olson has some students from the Civic Engagement office helping to collect data.

Team #2 – had assigned each subcomponent to a team member to do initial brainstorming and collection of documentation, with a timetable for going through each subcomponent. What is happening, in a positive way, is that the team is revisiting each subcomponent each meeting and building upon the knowledge base as more is discovered and additional subcomponents are covered.

Team #3 – has been unable to meet since the last Steering Committee meeting

Team #4 – hasn't met as a whole group since the last Steering Committee visit; instead members have been focusing on preparing for the Suskie visit. The team has expressed concern about making sure their efforts result in information-gathering and analysis and not just a "data dump."

Team #5 – is in process of reviewing the gamma changes to their criterion (which were many). They have two new members who will be joining, David Patterson (professor) and Brian Bertrand (graduate student). They have updated their storyboard.

B. Issues that came up from team discussions

1. Documentation location/storage and retrieval

Team #5 raised the question about whether to put their documents in D2L, on the t-drive or both. They find the t-drive more useful in terms of working on a document and not having to pull it down and put it back up; the t-drive allows for easier editing. Lori noted that at the previous Steering Committee meeting it was agreed by the group to *at least* update the database of documentation on the t-drive; the database has a column that notes where each item in the database is located (whether that is on the t-drive or D2L or a web link). Lori also reminded the larger committee that we agreed to use the categories/offices as they exist in the campus directory when we are labeling or naming documents in the t-drive/on D2L, so that we are all consistent as much as possible.

2. Documentation format and usage

Team #5 also wondered how to be systematic about who is putting documents up, where they are putting them up and in what format. This continues to be an issue for all of the teams. Alan noted that there is no clean way to do it; Doug suggested that when materials are uploaded to the t-drive that whoever does so could email the Steering Committee to alert them about new materials. Alan suggested that as teams put up materials, they should be sure to save data in its original form and keep that separate from versions or editions, so that the original is always clear and kept intact. As we work through actually creating and editing the self-study, different groups and chapters will use the data in different ways or use different pieces. Alan and the University Relations folks will meet to create a standard design

for the self-study. Until then, as teams work with the data and documentation, keep it in its original format as it is uploaded to D2L and the t-drive.

3. Templates for chapters/brainstorming

Several teams shared the same question about whether a template is available for the chapter organization and content. Team #2 was interested in a template or heuristic for the brainstorming itself, to make sure no perspective was overlooked. Lori suggested that sometimes templates can be too limiting too early in the process, but that it appears that teams are moving beyond initial brainstorming into formative processing of information. She will explore the template suggestion and return to the next Steering Committee with some possibilities. Beth suggested finding out what the reviewers are charged with evaluating. This topic is a good question for our consultant coming on Thur. At the very least, the chapters will have to summarize the strengths, concerns, and action plans for each criterion, so this can serve as an initial organizing methodology for collecting thoughts and analyses by team members.

C. Update on faculty professional development day on assessment (Team 4)

Lori and the faculty criterion team members from each criterion team updated the faculty body at Professional Development Day in January about accreditation progress to date. Part of the presentation mentioned the transition to Pathways after this round of accreditation and that revisions to things like program review instructions and data retrieval might be proposed as we move through the process, in order to create a more seamless transition into Pathways eventually. Faculty were very receptive to the rest of the day's focus on program assessment; they appreciated that time was set aside for this important task. Betsy passed out a suggested assessment plan template adaptable to the departments' varying levels of engagement with assessment; she has received a little less than 50% of the plans back from departments so far. Lori noted that this update at professional development day was a great opportunity to connect with faculty about HLC and wondered if other units/groups on campus would like to have her and/or Betsy (Assessment Coordinator) attend a similar gathering and provide updates or help. Some Steering Committee members will look into this, such as a presentation with MSUAASF.

D. Committee on Institutional Assessment web site (Teams 4 and Team 2)

Betsy and Lori shared that they had met with Kathleen to discuss how assessment was (not) being represented on the web site and how the CIA pages in particular could be redesigned and linked more prominently, making it easier to find (currently it is only able to be found by conducting a search). Wije Wijesiri from the CIA is making the changes to the actual pages, and Jacob Speer has created entry points for assessment on the SMSU site. Assessment will now be a heading on the Academics and Administration pages with a clear link to the CIA and with the expectation that more links will develop over time as assessment efforts increase. Lori noted that working on this specific task raised other web structure questions (some of which are related to Criterion 2's component that the university "presents itself clearly and completely to its students and to the public") and asked the committee to think about what other pages or information should be cross-linked or updated. Bill suggested we consider making Accreditation/HLC a quick link eventually.

III.   Timeline revision note

Lori noted that before sending the Self-Study Design document to Dr. John Taylor, our HLC liaison, for review, she had updated the proposed timeline to reflect a distinction between gathering and analysis of existing documentation and chapter draft efforts and ongoing work gathering and analyzing field research.

Under 2011-2012, the last line now states: "**FIRM** deadline: by end of the spring semester 2012, criterion teams finish gathering documentation and submit draft material for their chapters." The beginning line of 2012-2013 now states: "Criterion teams finish collection of field research and other information-gathering and revise chapter material accordingly."

IV.   Brainstorming across teams on field research types and questions (focus groups, surveys) and use of D2L

Time ran out to do this during the meeting, but Lori reminded everyone of the D2L survey feature and that blank surveys for different constituencies are there for each team to start adding questions to.

V.   Update if response received yet on Self-Study Design feedback
No report yet as no feedback yet received.

VI.   Graduate student representation—appointment of Brian Bertrand
Brian was appointed to work with Team #5.

VII.   Other
A. Lori noted that she will contact the Student Government President Kyle Berndt to ask about student representation to the Steering Committee. The student who had been attending, Joe Stremcha, is no longer formally associated with Student Government since the last elections.

B. Lori reminded the group that the delta version of the criteria will be coming in March.

VIII.   Next Meeting: Feb. 17th, 9:00 – 10:15, SC 206