

**HLC Steering Committee
Minutes
Feb. 17th, 2012**

*9:00 – 10:15
SC 206*

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

Absent:, Beth Weatherby, Deb Kerkaert, student representative

Agenda

I. Discussion of HLC Liaison John Taylor's comments on the Self-Study Design document

The centrality of institutional mission was noted in Dr. Taylor's comments. There was discussion of how to interpret paragraph three in particular, as to whether Dr. Taylor's statement was a reference to our mission specifically, a reference to the kind of data that should be gathered, or more general advice about how mission should be substantiated. Lori will contact Dr. Taylor for clarification. Another idea linked to mission was that our strategic planning and assessment will need to be included as we consider how to demonstrate that we are meeting our 13 institutional goals. Alan explained that one of Dr. Taylor's references to the number of off-site locations reflected an error on our statement of institutional affiliation that will be corrected after an upcoming survey is complete. These are not true "off-site" locations but our 2+2 agreement schools, which is different. Regarding Dr. Taylor's note about representation on the self-study teams, Lori said that she would contact Jay Lee again about whether additional members of the MSUAASF union would like to join any criterion team.

II. Follow-up regarding Linda Suskie (assessment and accreditation consultant) visit on Jan. 26th and her report Team reports

Steering committee members commented that the visit was very valuable. The presentations focused on the LEP outcomes assessment and where to go with that process. Suskie made three recommendations in her follow-up report. LEC and CIA are talking about these and moving them forward; the third recommendation is on our agenda today. The Provost has made concerted efforts to support assessment specifically (including the creation of the Assessment Coordinator position prior to Suskie's visit). Jan reported that Suskie noted the "good vibes" at SMSU regarding assessment and that our faculty and staff are positive, respectful, and focused on teaching. A question was asked about Suskie's recommendations for how to roll up from program to institutional assessment. While she did not cover this specifically in her visit, she made it clear the "no one size fits all" and that we do not need to standardize assessment such that every program and department does it in exactly the same way; assessment methods need to fit the institution and program.

III. LEP Assessment planning; upcoming meetings for faculty and related staff (Feb. 29, 3:30 – 5:00, Lower CC; March 20, 4:00 – 5:30, upper BA/library plaza)

These LEP assessment planning meetings are a direct outcome of the Suskie visit and an effort to keep the momentum going that has been gained from the January Professional Development day focused on assessment and the subsequent Suskie visit. LEC members are going to serve as facilitators for small groups based on each LEP outcome. Instructors of courses related to each outcome will be contacted and encouraged to come and brainstorm together on how to build upon what is already being done in and with classes for assessment. This is a grass roots effort with broad campus involvement. Faculty should and do “own” assessment for learning outcomes. Betsy noted that Suskie made it clear that there is “no ‘A’ for effort” any more when it comes to assessment; we need plans for all ten LEP objectives, clear timelines, and data collected and analyzed and reflected upon in the self-study. Corey noted that this is an acceleration of the assessment plan created by LEC last year in which two goals would be assessed each year; the entire plan needs to be in place, not just two goals at a time, and there needs to be flexibility built in depending on what the assessments uncover. Suskie noted that each LEP goal should have some sort of requirement associated with it, if we are to deliver on our implied promises to deliver these goal areas to our students; two of the LEP outcomes do not have specific requirements associated with them at this stage.

IV. Self-study tables of contents and chapter examples (to address template and chapter expectation questions from previous meeting)

Lori brought in copies of tables of contents from five schools and two sample chapters from two schools. These samples were gathered from the Self-Study Fair at last year’s HLC meeting. While these samples are arranged based on the current criteria, which will not be the same criteria we base our self-study on, they demonstrate how the self-study and chapters might be arranged and how they present an argument. Lori distributed a handout she created of what to look for in terms of argument, style, and design from these samples that the criterion teams could consider as they develop their own chapters. The committee reviewed and discussed some of the examples. It was deemed highly useful by the group to see these samples at this stage and to take them back to their criterion teams.

Looking at the print samples caused some discussion of what would be different for us given that we will be required to produce an electronic self-study. Bill asked about the inclusion of video. The group liked the idea of some video links being embedded if allowed. We will continue to explore this possibility as HLC clarifies its expectations over the next two years.

V. Team reports

A. Team #1

– meeting next week to update each other; individual team members are each gathering specified information.

B. Team #2

– is fairly well done with brainstorming on Core Components 2B, 2C, and 2D; still working on 2A and 2E. Some struggles with 2B, as the group is exploring what “clear and complete” would mean to students and the community. It is easy to identify where the university has made the types of information listed available, but a focus group is probably needed to test perceptions. The team is also looking at the Senior Survey for questions that might already gather information we could use. Alan shared that the Senior Survey is ready for a revision and that all criterion teams can think of questions that they might propose for it, if useful for

accreditation purposes. The NSSE is another tool that might have relevant questions. The NSSE is required by MnSCU but would have to be carefully mined for specific things that the teams need, as there is a lot of data related to standardized questions and different benchmarks such as peer institutions and national data. Alan will send out the questions on the Senior Survey and NSSE to the Steering Committee members to share with their teams.

C. Team #3

– met and finished going through the gamma version of the criteria as a group. Each will be gathering data.

D. Team #4

– has about half of their data collected. They will work through the newly-endorsed “Committed to Quality: Guidelines for Assessment and Accountability” document. The examples from the chapters are helpful to show how to summarize their findings. Betsy had Glenn Horky create an assessment folder on the t-drive for every department and program to upload their assessment findings and process to; this should make it easier to gather and have in one place all program assessment data. The question from their group was what should be done if during this process a problem is discovered? Is it reported in the self-study only with a future plan for action, or does action need to begin once the problem is discovered? The consensus is that action needs to be taken as we go; HLC will want to see continuing progress and that we are aware of any problems or shortcomings and consciously working on them. This does not mean that all problems will be solved by the time the self-study is complete, but it does show we are “closing the loop” as we go through the assessment cycle.

E. Team #5

– had to cancel their most recent meeting but are meeting next week. The members of this team are also involved in Strategic Planning, a key component to this criterion, and that group has met and just coordinated the Strategic Planning morning activities on Feb. 15th.

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

Data is currently being retrieved from existing surveys (see discussion under Team #2 above). Alan shared that the Admissions Office has the “Retain” program that we could use to create surveys and analyze the results. Several other surveying instruments are possible, including Survey Monkey and Qualitrix from the Foundation/Alumni Office. SMAC (Southwest Marketing Advisory Center) is another possibility.

VII. Other

A. Lori reminded the group that the delta (final) version of the criteria are scheduled to come out at the end of February at the next HLC Board meeting. She will forward them to the committee as soon as she sees them.

B. It was noted that our accreditation work will need to tie back to the MnSCU level and that we should be clear not only about our own mission but how our mission relates to the system level. The new chancellor has been using language in his written and spoken presentations on things such as closer scrutiny of what students are doing and learning, as well as on persistence and graduation, not just enrollments. Lori noted this is a clear tie-in

to federal (and HLC) emphases on outcomes-oriented assessment and student learning. The chancellor's term "extraordinary education" might be a good way to characterize SMSU.

VIII. Next Meeting: March 16, 9:00 – 10:15, SC 206