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College Curriculum Committee(s)

Dennis Jaehne, AVP/Undergraduate Studies

RE: Program Self-Reflection Using the WASC Rubric: A Needs Assessment Survey from Undergraduate Studies

Colleagues:

I write to notify you of a helpful resource document recently posted to our UGS website. Assessment Director Jackie Snell has posted a quick guide (2 pages) to developing (and refining) learning objectives that are measurable.

We thought you might find this resource useful because, after completing the review of about 250 curriculum changes proposed last semester, I noted that the learning outcomes listed on numerous greensheets were often loosely worded and/or not readily measurable. (For example, "student will learn to *appreciate*, or *know*, or *understand*...") While certainly we want to reach these general learning goals, general goals will not help us demonstrate what students learned in the course (or program) nor identify what they can be expected to do after completing the course or program. Additionally, measureable outcomes can be most helpful in guiding us toward targeted improvements.

Because faculty shepherd the curriculum that is the core of learning, it is important that they keep on top of whether or not (or how well) the curriculum they design and offer produces the student learning faculty intend and desire.

Your colleagues in Undergraduate Studies want to be helpful to your efforts. We will continue to seek out useful reference material and other supportive resources. If you think of something that would help, please let me or Assessment Director Snell (4-3484) or Assessment Coordinator Lynda Heiden (4-5647) know. We are always happy to meet with interested department and/or college (curriculum) committees and to help with planning or arranging for workshops, training, feedback, consultation, etc. Please contact Kim Huynh in our UGS office (4-2447) to set up a visit if you feel it would be useful.

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On a related note, we also want to assist you in your efforts to have your programs be fully prepared when our next accreditation cycle

begins. WASC has prepared a rubric for the site visit teams to use when evaluating how well programs have demonstrated the degree to which students are meeting their program learning outcomes. The rubric is available on our website at: <http://www.sjsu.edu/ugs/assessment/> -- click on "program learning outcomes rubric" for the pdf).

The rubric evaluates a program on five dimensions, and at four levels of achievement. We want to invite each program to use this as the basis for a curriculum committee discussion to locate your current level of achievement for each dimension. We recommend that, following this discussion, it would be a useful strategy to develop an action step for each dimension that would move the program to the next level of achievement (where appropriate). These action steps can then form the basis of an improvement plan that can benchmark what the program is doing and will facilitate documentation of progress. Because the WASC visiting team will have these rubrics in hand when they visit, it will be useful for programs to be able to point to such plans and their work toward continued improvement of educational effectiveness.

We don't wish to set this up a "reporting requirement" at all. However, it would be helpful to us in Undergraduate Studies to inventory where programs believe they are on each dimension so that we can develop more strategic plans for needed resources and support at the institutional level. That is especially important in an era of tight budgets, as you might imagine. In that regard, if you could share your results and the action steps with my office by the end of the semester we could in turn do some planning in the summer to better support your efforts next year.

We appreciate your efforts to improve program quality and achievement of student outcomes. Experience from many campuses demonstrates repeatedly that only engaged faculty can successfully drive this process. We hope you'll perceive these suggestions as useful in your conversations. And let us repeat that we are happy to assist in any way possible.