

Chairs meeting November 13

Jim Buckley's summary:

This meeting of the CAS and SSBM Chairs was chaired by David Haddad to discuss departmental goals. Departments who have not developed departmental goals were asked to do so. The departments of Physics, Marketing, and Modern Languages reported on their own efforts to discuss departmental goals, and Chairs discussed how to do this in each department. Copies of the materials passed out by these departments may be available from Mary Lowe, Gerard Athaide, and Diane Chaffee Sorace. These presentations took about 45 minutes.

Jim Buckley passed out Middle States' Student Learning Assessment (available for purchase at www.msache.org/piubs.html, although it can also be legally copied) and a draft of "frequently asked questions" about educational learning aims. He suggested that both documents addressed some of the issues raised in the discussion and that the faculty Academic Assessment Committee was planning on running some workshops next semester on some of the issues involved.

Student Learning Assessment provides only what its subtitle calls "options and resources". It is not another set of requirements. Different departments are going to have to figure out what is and what is not useful in this book.

I suggested two reasons for distributing the book. First, faculty fall into at least three groups on this issue, with at least three different sets of problems. There are those who are used to "assessment" issues because their accreditors ask it of them – accreditors as different as AACSB, NACATE, ASHA, CACREP, ABET. This book might help these sort out the problem of redundancy, figuring out how to make their accrediting requirements and Loyola requirements work together. There are also those who are not sure enough what it is to know how to treat it; this book should give them a first overview of what is involved – e.g., on the topic of today's meeting (learning goals), see chapter 2.. Finally, there are those who are skeptical that "assessment" is going to press liberal arts into an alien framework; this book will give them a focused target for discussion.

Second, one of the things this book does that not all the literature does is candidly acknowledge the ways "assessment" can go wrong. For example "a perceived lack of faculty interest in assessment could be caused by the belief that assessment initiatives yield little of no information" (p. 67), etc. The book does not try to whitewash the problems and challenges. However, I also suggested that the book does not always succeed in either saying positively what is involved, or ruling out problems we may run into.

Similarly, I proposed that the responses to the "frequently asked questions" (created by David Haddad, Jim Buckley, and Lee Dahringer) will help us keep the issues and problems clear. Some of what is printed on the handout was said during the discussion. But there is another set of "frequently asked questions" that we are reviewing with the

faculty Academic Assessment Committee -- these questions try to address issues not addressed here as well as incorporate past Loyola documents and principles into them. Chairs had questions like "Where do we go from here?" Much depends on whether departments already have articulated goals or not. At some point departments have to address the question of the relationship between their departmental goals and the undergraduate aims passed by the Senate last Spring. Departments at some point must move to the question of how we know we are or are not achieving our goals.

Jim

P.S. My own opinion is that the answer to the "Where will we go from here?" is "Several directions at once". CAS Chairs will need to discuss developing departmental aims with their departments. CAS Chairs will have to discuss the issues at their meetings. The faculty Academic Assessment Committee will have its own plans. The Core Review Committee (whose purposes will be discussed by the Senate at the next meetings. Etc.