

## **ASSESSMENT TEAM REPORT: SPRING 2009**

### **I. Committee Structure and History**

The Assessment Team served as a college committee from January 2008 until May 8 (the end of Spring semester), though it underwent a major restructuring (with significant changes in membership) in January 2009. Originally convened by Keith Snow-Flamer, Vice President of Learning and Student Development, to develop and oversee both academic and Student Service assessment, it was presided over by co-chairs (one faculty and one administrative manager), and members included representatives from Student Services, administration, and faculty. Despite the co-chair leadership, the faculty co-chair was allocated no reassigned time to carry out the committee's work in Spring 2008, though in Fall 2009, she was allocated approximately 13% reassigned time. Throughout the Fall 2008 term, the co-chair structure was also marked by recurring communication problems, particularly regarding the communication of important decisions and information to the faculty co-chair. In January 2009, Dr. Snow-Flamer notified the Assessment Team that the administrative co-chair would no longer be serving on the committee. After conferring with Dr. Snow-Flamer about problems within the Assessment Team structure, the remaining faculty chair (Susan Nordlof) re-configured the Team in January 2009 as a faculty committee focused on academic assessment. For the Spring 2009 term, the chair was allocated 40% reassigned time to lead the Team. However, at the close of the Spring 2009 semester, the administration had not responded to committee entreaties to plan and/or negotiate reassigned time for the faculty assessment coordinator/Assessment Team in the 2009-10 academic year.

#### **Membership Spring 2009**

Susan Nordlof—Chair  
 Dan Calderwood—BTECH\  
 Justine Shaw—ALSS  
 Mark Winter—ALSS  
 Kerry Mayer—HUMCOM  
 Aeron Ives—MSE  
 Leslie Leach—Classified/Instructional (HUMCOM)  
 Sean Herrera-Thomas—Associate Faculty (HUMCOM)

In addition, Dave Bazard (MSE) and Cindy Hooper (ALSS), while not active members of the committee, received all Assessment Team communications and served as liaisons with the Program Review committee

### **II. Goals and Work Accomplished Spring 2009**

From January 2009, the Assessment Team concentrated on moving the college from the Awareness/Development stage of SLO assessment (WASC Rubric for Evaluating Institutional Effectiveness) to the Proficiency stage by concentrating on four major goals:

## **1. Groundwork For General Education Assessment in the 2009-10 Academic Year.**

Building on work started in Fall 2008, the committee collaborated with the Academic Senate to revise and streamline GE Student Learning Outcomes (approved by Senate Feb. 2009). Members also researched models for assessing GE outcomes from many colleges and universities nationwide. In February 2009, the committee agreed to adapt the GE assessment model of Johnson County Community College in Kansas, based on strong consensus that an interdisciplinary assessment process would be most beneficial for General Education. In March and April, the committee advanced its plans to adopt the JCCC model at CR—with the support of two faculty development opportunities: the Chair's (Susan Nordlof's) participation in an extended workshop on the JCCC GE assessment model at the March 2009 League of Innovation conference and the day-long training with consultant Fred Trapp, focused primarily on adapting the JCCC GE process.

By the middle of April, though, the real nuts-and-bolts practical planning for GE assessment in the 2009-10 year began to stall without dedicated institutional support from the CR administration. Though the committee repeatedly requested that the CR administration commit the institutional resources essential to realize the Team's plans for GE assessment, these requests went unheeded. By the final Assessment Team meeting on May 8, it was clear that without institutional resources and support, the committee would be unable to put in place the GE assessment process it had worked on.

## **2. Groundwork For AA Liberal Arts Degree Assessment in the 2009-10 Academic Year.**

On January 16, the Assessment Team facilitated a flex workshop in which faculty met in AA Liberal Arts Area groups and began to compose SLOs for these new degrees. With reminders and assistance from the Team, faculty continued revising these SLOs, completing them by April 14, 2009.

At the same time, the committee responded to the faculty's request for user-friendly materials to compile and analyze course- and discipline-level assessment results by adapting (with some changes) forms and processes from Cabrillo College. These materials were designed to be used for either course SLOs or Program/Degree SLOs—and most importantly, to encourage meaningful faculty collaboration on teaching and learning. In late April and early May, the Assessment Team worked with the Program Review committee to fine-tune these materials and to build them into the annual academic Program Review reports. The Assessment Team also created directions and models to help explain the use these materials to faculty.

## **3. Groundwork for Faculty Development in Assessment**

In late January and early April, the Assessment Team collaborated with the Academic Senate on a Faculty Development proposal. The section on "Assessment and Program Improvement" highlighted the need for assessment workshops in which faculty would be provided meeting times, locations, and flex credit to "compile, analyze, and discuss

samples of student work and/or assessment data to evaluate how well student learning matches the intended course and program outcomes.” The proposal also included a plan for developing Faculty Inquiry Groups (FIGS) to “identify and investigate questions about their students' learning and success...[in a] process [that] is collaborative, ongoing, and informed by evidence with the goal of improving success and retention rates.” The following resources were requested to support the proposal:

- Committee and/or flex time credit for participating faculty
- Meeting space for assessment and FIG activities
- Reassigned time for designated faculty to initiate and facilitate assessment and FIG processes
- Venue for sharing assessment and FIG results with the campus community (including flex time), support services (clerical, IR, etc.)
- Budget and space for library of professional resources relating to assessment and program improvement

The Academic Senate co-presidents submitted the Faculty Development proposal to the college President during the Spring semester, but the Assessment Team was never informed of a response or a commitment of institutional resources to carry out these plans.

#### **4. Groundwork for a Department/Discipline Assessment Self-Evaluation Tool**

Uncomfortable with the academic assessment evaluation rubric developed in Fall 2008 by Student Services directors/administrators, the Assessment Team requested that this rubric be taken off the Assessment/Program Review website—to be replaced ultimately by a self-evaluation instrument which faculty could use as a means of charting progress and goals in assessing disciplines and programs. Although the Assessment Team researched a number of self-evaluation tools throughout the semester—and discussed their pros and cons—by the committee’s final meeting on May 8, it had not yet completed a final version of this project.

#### **Analysis: Assessment Roadblocks Spring 2009**

The most formidable obstruction that the Assessment Team faced in the Spring 2009 semester was not resistance from faculty colleagues (as might be expected) but rather the ambivalence of college administration about supporting faculty-driven assessment measures. This ambivalence manifested itself in delays or failures to respond to direct requests from the Assessment Team for support and for administrative commitment to help carry out the Team’s work. As a result, the monumental and crucial labors that the college faces to comply with the ACCJC Standard IB and Standard IIA have been hindered, and the faculty is losing faith that CR’s administration will accept a faculty-designed academic assessment process, despite the almost universal consensus in the world of higher education (reflected in WASC standards) that, to be meaningful, assessment must be faculty-designed and –driven.

Although the administrative ambivalence about faculty-driven assessment is discernible in the committee’s original structure as established in January 2008, it became more apparent after the Assessment Team reorganized in January 2009. Notably, the April 1, 2009 Accreditation

Response Report disregarded the faculty Assessment Team's work in Spring 2009 and plans for the 2009-10 academic year, focusing instead on activities at a Enrollment Management Retreat and on the evaluation of academic program reviews that was carried out in Fall 2008 by the administrative Assessment Team co-Chair (an evaluation process and rubric which was implemented without having been approved by the committee). A later revision of the Accreditation Response Report, however, was submitted to the Assessment Team for correction and augmentation.

The Assessment Team's Spring 2009 goals for developing GE and AA Liberal Arts degree assessment processes were also hampered by the uncertain state of the college's administrative structure for 2009-2010—even down to the grassroots level of Department Chairs. Given all of these unknowns, the Assessment Team found it difficult to develop procedures for large-scale academic assessment in any detail.

By the end of the Spring semester, the Assessment Team was forced to recognize that its investment of time, study, and work throughout the Spring 2009 semester would likely be wasted effort. Several times throughout the Spring 2009 semester, the Assessment Team has requested support from college administration—support that is necessary if faculty-designed academic assessment is to become an integral part of the college's culture. The Team defined this requisite support as follows:

1. Adequate reassigned time for faculty assessment coordinator (Chair, Assessment Team).
2. Compensation for faculty participating in GE assessment activities (training, artifact scoring) taking place outside of the Fall and Spring semesters.
3. Support staff to facilitate assessment record-keeping and to help carry out the GE assessment process.
4. Faculty development resources in support of assessment training and assessment activities.

The request for support staff to take minutes of Assessment Team meetings had been made to Dr. Snow-Flamer multiple times since January 2009 with no clear, substantive results. A request for these four areas of requisite support was made to President Marsee at a March 5 meeting, but all were dismissed. In a meeting with Dr. Snow-Flamer on March 26, the Assessment Team Chair maintained that unless the administration committed very soon to providing necessary support, the committee would be unable to continue its work on GE and Liberal Arts Assessment or to meet its goals. No response from the administration was forthcoming. On April 1, after having read the Accreditation Response Report, the Assessment Team Chair wrote to Dr. Snow-Flamer expressing the Team's dismay that their work and plans were not reflected in the report and explaining that the Team must interpret this omission, along with the failure to provide support, as a tacit administrative mandate to abandon faculty-designed academic assessment projects. No response from the administration was forthcoming.

Finally with the April 17 ACCJC follow-up visit a week away, the Assessment Team's repeated requests for support were answered on April 10 in a memo from Dr. Snow-Flamer that asserted "The administration welcomes the opportunity to discuss with you and CRFO the support needed to accomplish our collective goal of improving student learning and attaining the Sustainable

Continuous Quality Improvement level in Student Learning Outcomes by 2012.” Unfortunately, this discussion never took place—either with Dr. Snow-Flamer or with his successor as VP for Academic Affairs, Dr. Marjorie Carson. Almost three weeks after the Assessment Team Chair first contacted Dr. Carson requesting an appointment to discuss the future of academic assessment at CR, the meeting did take place, but Dr. Carson did not respond to the committee’s urgent request for support to carry out its work into the 2009-2010 year. She was also unable to attend either of the Team’s last two meetings, despite the committee’s willingness to adjust its schedule in an attempt to accommodate hers. In a final attempt to salvage the work of the faculty Assessment Team, the Chair offered to be on call during the summer for communication and consultation with the new academic administrative team, but she was never contacted

The Assessment Team found its faculty colleagues to be more than willing to take on the professional duties of assessment—within the constraints of their already overwhelming work loads. In fact, we were impressed with the excellent work that many departments are doing to develop meaningful assessments in courses and programs; coming together to discuss and plan for the improvement of student learning is what we do as conscientious professionals, and much is being done, despite the lack of institutional support and coordinated faculty development. The Spring 2009 Assessment Team hopes that this fine work will be honored and encouraged by our college--that it will be shared and developed—and not reduced to merely filling in forms and reporting data. An assessment process that values data and data reporting above all else cannot foster an environment of continued academic enhancement, no matter how many forms we complete or scores we report. We educators should always remember that the heart of academic assessment must remain faculty talking to faculty about what we do to help students learn.