

April 27, 2011

To: Members of the HOAP (Help for Outcomes Assessment) group  
From: Ellen Wentland  
Re: Minutes of the 11:30 a.m. April 27, 2011 meeting of the HOAP Committee  
Attendees: Nancy Garcia, Kerin Hamidiani, Rick Lizotte, Suzanne Van Wert, Ellen Wentland, Steve Mathis

This is the first meeting since the November 2, 2010 meeting. The meeting originally planned for December 7 was cancelled.

The institutional level assessment conducted this academic year, focused on Global Awareness and Quantitative Reasoning, was described and the process discussed. The method used was a scenario, created to capture some of the essential elements in the definitions of those two skills. After reading this scenario, students are asked to respond to a series of questions, with their responses providing an indication of their grasp of some of the components of the two underlying skills. This method involving a uniform assignment was selected in part due to the experience with last year's institutional assessment, where raters of student products noticed unevenness in the specificity and quality of assignments developed by faculty and used in this assessment.

The scenarios are being distributed in classes which have been identified as having students with between 45-50 NECC credit hours. Because many of these students were found in more than one of the identified classes, care was taken to select classes such that the identified students would be represented just once. The administration of this assessment is done by the class instructor, and detailed instructions were provided. Because the entire class participates, there will be many students who complete the assignment who lack the requisite NECC credit hours. At least some of these students will be used as a comparison group, as a way of addressing another of the issues discussed after last year's assessment, namely the absence of baseline data.

This summer, a rubric to evaluate the submitted assignments will be developed, and faculty members recruited to assist with the ratings. Results are expected by the start of the fall term.

Another topic of discussion was the core academic skills in general, and the initiative currently underway to ensure that each of these skills is sufficiently taught in each of the academic programs. This initiative includes providing detailed descriptions of the skills, and requesting that every program have courses identified that could deliver the skills content. Each of these courses would be designated as intensive with respect to the identified skill. In this way, all students going through NECC programs would have experienced at least one intensive course related to each of the skills. HOAP members discussed this initiative including perceptions of the process and concerns.

Possible alternatives to the "intensive courses" approach were discussed, including capstone courses and portfolios. Although there is interest in portfolios, there is also recognition of the number of issues that would need to be addressed before this approach can be used for assessment purposes.

The meeting was adjourned at 1 PM.