

October 18, 2006

To: Members of the HOAP (Help for Outcomes Assessment) group

From: Ellen Wentland

Re: Second meeting of 2006/07 academic year – October 18, 2006

Attendees: Judith Ciampi, Rose Dittmer, Joanna Fortna, Gerry Morin, Paulette Redmond, Suzanne VanWert, Ruth Young, Anne Zabriskie, Bill Zaninni

Others: Nita Lamborghini, Rick Lizotte, Janice Rogers

The main topic of discussion had to do with whether students need to consent to the use of their course work for program-level assessment. The situation we are discussing is one where students complete a course-required assignment which will be used for course grading purposes, and also for program assessment. If assignments are to be used for program assessment, the students' work would be copied prior to the instructor's grading. The students' names would be removed and likely replaced with the student ID number. Then a program level group/committee would evaluate the assignments using program level scoring procedures and standards.

The question is whether students need to be informed that their work may be used for this program-level purpose. I told the group members that I had recently attended a FERPA meeting held on campus, in which the attorney for the Massachusetts Community College System provided his opinion on a variety of matters related to students' rights concerning their records. I specifically asked the attorney whether consents would need to be obtained in order to use student work for program assessment. I provided the scenario described above. His response was that we do not need to get their consent or even to inform them that their work might be used for program assessment. This is a legitimate educational interest, and the student would not be individually identifiable.

I also asked him whether the student's age made a difference. If a student is not yet 18, do different rules apply? He said that students' rights are defined with respect to the students' context, not age. If they are a college student, we can treat them all the same, irrespective of their age.

Rose Dittmer had also attended the FERPA meeting, and was present for the age discussion. She agreed with the above summary. However, there is another possible issue related to "dual-enrollment" status which we can talk about at our next meeting, in terms of whether this would affect program assessment at NECC..

Group members did not feel completely comfortable with a practice of not informing students. One thought I had was to include a general statement on all syllabi that this collection of work for program assessment might be done. As we discussed this, group members thought that

perhaps an institution-wide policy statement could be developed, and then placed in the Student Handbook and on the website. Then instructors could call students' attention to the policy, but at least we're assured that it has been included in students' materials. This approach would be preferable to inclusion on syllabi because that would depend on individual instructors remembering to do this. I told them I would discuss this with Lane Glenn when I meet with him on November 2.

We also talked about the additional work required of program administrators and faculty once they begin the assessment of outcomes. Judith Ciampi and Anne Zabriskie have been involved in outcomes assessment because they have accredited/approved programs with assessment requirements. They talked about the demands this requirement creates, including for assessment development and administration, data collection and entry, and data analysis and development of action plans. We talked about the desirability/need to have resources on campus to assist program faculty in carrying out their assessment responsibilities. I had hoped that an assistant position I have not yet filled would help in this regard. Group members had additional suggestions including creating work-study, co-op, and internship opportunities for students. Again, I indicated I would discuss this with Lane.

Another item had to do with having resources to support program assessment, such as to pay DCE or part-time faculty for their involvement. I indicated there was a budget for program review/assessment. However, the availability of the funds and the means to secure them are not clear. Again, this is another topic I will raise with Lane.

The next meeting will be Wednesday, November 29 at noon in B136.