

AGENDA

ACADEMIC COUNCIL

Friday, August 27, 2010
Thurmond 212, 2:00 pm

- I. Approval of the minutes from the April 2, 2010 meeting.
- II. Remarks from the Chair Dave Pretty
- III. Remarks from the VPAA.....Tom Moore
- V. Discussion of Universitywide Competencies.....Jack DeRochi
- VI. Unfinished Business
- VII. New Business
- VIII. Announcements
- IX. Adjournment

*University-Wide Academic Assessment Committee (UWAAC) Report
for Vice President of Academic Affairs Moore
July 30, 2010*

Executive Summary

The University-Wide Academic Assessment Committee (UWAAC) is recommending four university-level competencies for approval during the 2010-2011 academic year.

Background

With the approval of the Touchstone Program in 2002, the General Education Assessment Advisory Committee was formed by Vice President Moore in order to review the effectiveness of the program's fulfillment of the General Education goals. Over the last five years, while gathering assessment data, it became apparent that a gap existed between what was expected of students as illustrated by the original seven General Education Goals and the new curriculum as prescribed by the Touchstone Program. Specifically, during the "Recertification" process of 2009-2010, when courses were required to apply for recertification as courses that met General Education Guidelines, it became clear that the courses fulfilled the requirements of the new Touchstone Program but not the original seven General Education Goals. While Winthrop University was recognizing the gap as revealed by its assessment protocol, a shift emerged in the rhetoric used at SACS meetings and workshops: SACS colleagues questioned the assumption that applying the goals only to students in their first two years was an accurate means for measuring learning outcomes for graduates. Instead, they suggested that adding end-of-program assessments for capacities developed throughout the curriculum would yield the most concrete data for analyzing the effectiveness of our programs.

Dr. Moore therefore charged the General Education Assessment Advisory Committee—now renamed the University-Wide Academic Assessment Committee (UWAAC)—to "recommend to the Vice President for Academic Affairs appropriate university-level undergraduate competencies that are clear, assessable, and attainable by Winthrop graduates across degree programs." The committee commenced with developing university-level competencies that are consistent with Winthrop University's Mission Statement.

Summary of Research

UWAAC determined that Winthrop's University-Level Competencies (ULCs) should stem as much as possible from current Winthrop assessment plan templates. The committee therefore reviewed program-level student learning outcomes (SLOs) for *all* programs across Winthrop University. Although there were discipline-specific goals and outcomes for each program, it was apparent during this review that four consistent themes emerged across the university. Most programs developed certain goals that revolved around four essential categories: a) critical thinking and problem solving, b) appreciation of multiple perspectives, c) the discipline's interconnectedness with the

broader community, and d) communication and expression. All programs had a SLO coded in at least one of the categories.

In addition to this internal research, UWAAC conducted extensive secondary research and examined ULCs of accrediting agencies and peer institutions, documents reporting the history and methods of assessment (including the Association of American Colleges and Universities' *Liberal Education and America's Promise* vision), data regarding incoming student expectations, and surveys of employer interests and expectations. The information uncovered in this secondary research confirmed the scope and direction of UWAAC's original four categories for university-level competencies.

Recommendation for Winthrop ULCs

Taking into consideration the above research, UWAAC recommends Winthrop University faculty approve the following ULCs (full report includes strategy/assessment examples):

Competency 1: Winthrop graduates think critically and solve problems.

Winthrop University graduates reason logically, evaluate and use evidence, and solve problems. They seek out and assess relevant information from multiple viewpoints to form well-reasoned conclusions. Winthrop graduates consider the full context and consequences of their decisions and continually reexamine their own critical thinking process, including the strengths and weaknesses of their arguments.

Competency 2: Winthrop graduates are personally and socially responsible.

Winthrop University graduates value integrity, perceive moral dimensions, and achieve excellence in their work. They take seriously the perspectives of others, practice ethical reasoning, and reflect on experiences. Winthrop graduates hold a sense of responsibility to the broader community and contribute to the greater good.

Competency 3: Winthrop graduates understand the interconnected nature of the world and the time in which they live.

Winthrop University graduates comprehend the historical, social, and global contexts of their disciplines and their lives. They also recognize how their chosen area of study is inextricably linked to other fields. Winthrop graduates collaborate with members of diverse academic, professional, and cultural communities as informed and engaged citizens.

Competency 4: Winthrop graduates communicate effectively.

Winthrop University graduates communicate in a manner appropriate to the subject, occasion, and audience. They create texts – including but not limited to written, oral, and visual presentations – that convey content effectively. Mindful of their voice and the impact of their communication, Winthrop graduates successfully express and exchange ideas.

Future Considerations

The development of Winthrop University's ULCs is the first step in a larger process to meet two main goals. First, the development and university-wide assessment of ULCs allows Winthrop University to evaluate student progress toward developing "the ability to communicate effectively, appreciate diversity, work collaboratively, synthesize knowledge, solve complex problems and adapt to change" (*Winthrop University Undergraduate Catalog*, p. 1) and to document that progress to stakeholders (such as faculty, students, legislature, and SACS). Second, establishing a system for ongoing assessment of ULCs provides a structure to improve student learning across all programs of study.

In order for ULCs to become an effective tool for measuring institutional academic success and for improving undergraduate education, Winthrop University must build upon existing successful assessment strategies and implement new ones where needed. *Successful assessment improves student learning and demonstrates institutional effectiveness (or highlights areas for improvement)*. Such assessment of Winthrop's ULCs will require broad-based support and involvement from faculty in and out of the classroom. Finally, significant resources will be required to incorporate and assess ULCs successfully across all academic programs, including but not limited to support for faculty assessment leaders and support for the development and maintenance of new assessment processes.