

e-mail from Lea E. Williams to Dean Joseph L. Graves, Jr.

Joe:

I've reviewed the documentation you shared with me on the UNST assessment (evaluation plan, annual reports 2005-2006 to 2007-2008) and have the following observations:

1. Reading the UNST annual reports for the initial three years, I am impressed by the visionary scope of the revised general education core curriculum and the progress thus far in developing the foundation courses and building a faculty to deliver the course content.
2. Overall the assessment sections of the annual reports and the conceptualization of the evaluation plan captures data primarily on the pre- and post-testing results and the grade distribution for the foundation courses. Missing are the data for the in-class assessments described in the course syllabi, such as writing assignments, group work, minute papers, oral presentations, etc.? There should be multiple (at least two) means of measuring each objective, whether it's the course objective or the student learning outcomes. Final grades are but one measure and certainly not the most comprehensive.
3. There are learning objectives for each foundation course, but most of these objectives are not measurable as student learning outcomes. Most of the learning objectives describe what students are expected to learn, but do not tell how the learning will be measured. For example, a learning objective for Analytical Reasoning is: Use analytical thinking skills to evaluate information critically. How will students be expected to demonstrate mastery of this objective in the courses? See slide 14 of the attached Alabama A&M University PowerPoint for an example of how to build the two parts of a measurable student learning outcome.
4. Not all of the sample syllabi in the reports include the course objectives and the student learning outcomes.
5. The rubrics (Evaluation Plan, pp. 61-5; 2007-2008 Annual Report, pp. 75-8) are in the first stages of development. Eventually, the rubrics should include definitions, examples, etc. of the mastery expected of students at each level of performance from one to four in order to define terms such as "*fully understands how to,*" "*has a good ability to,*" "*has a fair ability to,*" and "*has a weak ability to.*" **Scott Simkins** has a wealth of information on developing rubrics and could help with the next draft of UNST rubrics.
6. Finally, there is scant discussion of the improvements that have been, or will be, made to the courses based on the assessment results. Again, expanding the assessment of courses beyond pre- and post-testing and final grades should provide more in depth data on course improvements needed.

**RECOMMENATION**

Convene a 90-minute to two-hour workshop on developing measurable student learning outcomes, which I would facilitate. See the attached Alabama A&M University PowerPoint, particularly slides 11-12, 14-16, which I would use during the workshop.

I would be glad to elaborate on my comments. Do you think that the workshop would be beneficial? Is so, how would you like to proceed to schedule it?

Thank you.

Lea