PRAC minutes

10/18/12


Absent: R. Zipoli, T. Radice

Meeting came to order at 9:40.

Access to the O drive remains a problem for some committee members. Until the problems are resolved, PRAC will continue to use an alternative method for sharing self-studies. Future assessment coordinators: please try to keep individual file size to under 5MB.

Richard Zipoli has had to take a temporary leave from the committee. Richard has been a valued and enthusiastic participant in PRAC and we would like him to come back soon.

S. Clerc met with Dr. Ilene Crawford and the external reviewer for Liberal Studies, Dr. Ann Rancourt, Associate Provost of Keene State University. Dr. Rancourt’s report will be received after this week’s UCF meeting. A few of the issues discussed included the need for Liberal Studies to develop a coherent curriculum, the possibility of portfolio assessments at stages in the students’ programs, and the importance of the administration’s role in supporting Liberal Studies with resources.

The majority of the meeting was spent reviewing Liberal Studies’ self-study and meeting with Dr. Ilene Crawford, director of the Liberal Studies program.

The report is well-written, more reflective than many studies we’ve seen, and Dr. Crawford is commended on a job well done. Standards 16 & 17 were handled particularly well and displayed tremendous candor and ideas for the future of the program.

Reviewing the LBS self-study presented a dilemma as the standards were written with traditional academic departments in mind and Liberal Studies departs from that model in a key way that prevents the kind of data gathering most departments engage in. The LBS self-study was written while a program revision was in the approval process, so the report was in some respects anticipating the changes while still describing the past.

Because of these differences, PRAC’s conversation with Dr. Crawford was more holistic and less standard-driven than our usual reviews. It should be emphasized that the conversation was collegial and the suggestions discussed below were reached collaboratively with Dr. Crawford. Dr. Crawford had already identified many of the issues in her report along with ideas on how they might be resolved, some of which hinged on the program revision being approved. Now that it has been approved at the university, it must be approved by the Board of Regents. When final approval is granted, the revisions can be implemented.

In order to engage in ongoing self-assessment, LBS will need to form a cohort of faculty, which will then lead to a coherent curriculum, syllabi, measurable outcomes, and the other data necessary for ongoing self-assessment. The conversation focused on ways the goals might be achieved, many of them requiring the participation of departments and resources from the university administration.

Students pursuing an LBS major take classes required for the minors in three departments. Faculty might not be aware of LBS students in their classes, departments might not track their minors, and the goals of the LBS major might not be familiar to many faculty.
LBS students require unique advisement. They are currently served by Academic Advising but would benefit from department-based advisors or mentors. Since students are enrolled in 3 minors, that means up to three advisors/mentors per student. Faculty advisors need to be aware of who the LBS students are and the goals of Liberal Studies.

A program similar to FYE would start to address these issues; every department would designate an LBS advisor or mentor, and these faculty members would receive training in advising LBS majors. The faculty who take on the role will require training and compensation. Something like the incentives used for the FYE pilot program or curriculum grants might be effective.

An LBS advisor program, added to the faculty who teach the IDS 140W capstone course, would develop a faculty cohort. The community could be further strengthened by having a public presentation of capstone projects every academic year (Scholars without Borders).

It was suggested that the departments who supply the highest numbers of LBS majors be encouraged to pilot an LBS advisor program. The top three departments are Education, Business Administration, and Psychology. Some departments already use a form that identifies their minors and LBS majors and this information would be essential for departments that agree to designate an LBS advisor. A reliable, simple university-level form yielding information that is supplied to the departments might help. A program like the one described above would provide the data necessary for ongoing LBS assessment per the 17 standards. It would also provide opportunities to develop a coherent curriculum which is another issue confronting LBS.

Students must have a plan for their LBS major. The information could form the basis for building articulated minors, spotting the connections among minors and courses across departments, developing sample tracks for students, and improved advisement.

In terms of assessing student progress and mapping outcomes, the capstone course will provide some data, but the idea of ongoing assessment was also discussed. Asking LBS students for reflection of their programs or samples of work at various stages in their program, and/or using the portfolio model possibly with TK20 were two of the suggestions made. Implementing TK20 would also require resources from the university administration.

Whether ideas discussed in committee are incorporated or not, in order to create an assessment plan, LBS will need to identify faculty, courses, outcomes and measures. In addition, PRAC recommended more information on the following questions:

- How does the LBS capstone work with minors that have their own capstone courses.
- Are there existing data on LBS students and faculty, that LBS could get from departments (without asking extra work from department)?
- A more thorough description of the plan for communication with faculty and departments.
- A more thorough description of plans, or the effectiveness of those plans, for recruiting majors at earlier stage in academic career.
- Data and analysis of the data from the capstone course.

Meeting adjourned 10:50
Submitted by Susan Clerc