



The February meeting of the University Faculty will be held on Monday, February 4, 2002, beginning at 5:00 PM in the Langone Center Forum. Professor Michael Payne will preside. If there are any amendments to the December, 2001 minutes, please send them to Andrea Halpern, Secretary of the Faculty, in advance of the meeting.

AGENDA

- 1. Amendments to December 2001 minutes**
- 2. Announcements and remarks by the President and members of his staff**
 - Report on January Board of Trustees Meeting
 - Merit aid
- 3. Announcements by the Chair of the Faculty**
 - Report on the planning process
 - Report on January Board of Trustees Meeting
- 4. Old Business**
 - Motion from Ben Marsh

Motion: The Athletics Department, in cooperation with the Committee on Instruction through its subcommittee on athletics, is requested to develop and endorse a policy about avoiding and reconciling conflicts between the academic needs of students on sports teams on the one hand, and the time demands of practices, games, and travel on the other. This policy must be consistent with the present "Policy on conflicts between regularly scheduled classes and other activities," and should be finalized by the end of the academic year.

Ideally such a policy should describe: general principles about the relative importance of sports to a student's university experience, explicit guidance on scheduling of practices during class hours, the rights of student athletes to study abroad, appropriate and inappropriate ways to influence faculty members, appropriate and inappropriate ways to influence students, methods to maintain open communication with the academic deans, methods to educate coaches and others about their obligations, methods to educate student athletes about their rights and responsibilities, and a statement of consequences for those who violate this policy.

Rationale: The athletic program needs to demonstrate that it is willing to be a fair partner in the academic project. To many faculty members the athletic program is presently too dominant, particularly in the competition for student athletes' time during academic hours. A discussion at the September meeting on this issue has been followed in November by an effort by a highly placed member of the athletic program to pressure an untenured faculty member through the Dean's office to excuse an athlete from very important class meetings. This is inexcusable, and reflects badly on the entire institution. A good policy might prevent such a problems.

5. New Business

- a. Report on Finance Committee of the Board of Trustees: Michael Moohr
- b. Report from Committee on Planning and Budget: Ben Marsh
Status of the 2002-03 budget and compensation package
- c. Report and motions from Committee on Instruction: George Exner

COMMITTEE ON INSTRUCTION REPORT ON ASSESSMENT

The Committee on Instruction (CoI) recommends to the faculty the adoption of an outcomes-based assessment program for student learning and advising. While such a program will be required for Middle States certification, the real question is what Bucknell ought to do for its own purposes. The following memorandum spells out the rationales and the advantages of an assessment program as well as the needed resources for such a program. Any assessment plan must be implemented gradually and what follows delineates short-term and long-term visions of the potential value of assessment at Bucknell. The following are the main points of the proposal:

1. **At their core, assessment plans should address the need for regular, constructive self-reflection on what we do collectively as scholars, teachers, and members of the University community.** CoI believes that the effort expended to do genuine, as opposed to *pro forma*, outcomes assessment will provide departments and individuals with a valuable opportunity to talk about curricular and co-curricular activities of departments and programs. Such conversations are rare because of the press of other duties but are desired by many faculty. An assessment plan offers a way to institutionalize such conversations.
2. **Assessment plans should be department and program based.** Departments and programs should have great latitude over the shape of their assessment plans and should be charged with creatively developing means to evaluate their departmental activities that conform to their respective disciplines. They should receive informational and other support from various bodies and should be able to submit their assessment plans for review on a voluntary basis (Proposal I). While there are certain minimal requirements for assessment plans in a general sense, there will be a variety of assessment strategies because of the meaningful differences between various academic units. For assessment issues beyond the department level, we propose below (Proposal II) a mechanism for addressing service courses, General Education goals, and some parts of student advising.
3. **Department and program assessment plans should develop incrementally, not all at once.** Assessment plans should not be onerous and should build gradually, but deliberately over time. Preliminary planning activity should focus on basic questions about what the department or program does, why it does these things, and how it can judge the ongoing value of its activities. In the short term, departments and programs should learn about assessment and should develop a simple plan for assessing and evaluating their various curricular and extra-curricular activities. The outcomes assessment plan will undergo revision and extension over time, on an ongoing basis.
4. **The University, and in particular the administration, must dedicate resources for this task.** Some resources will be needed for startup issues, and others will be needed for the ongoing task. Such a commitment of resources should be made soon, and publicly.
5. **Along with resources, the University must commit to valuing, recognizing, and rewarding efforts on behalf of outcomes-based assessment.** The place of such activities in tenure, promotion, and the merit system must be made clear in advance, and determined in consultation with the faculty.
6. **The assessment program agenda of the University should seek to find a balance between the limited time of the faculty and the limited resources of the University.** Appropriate allocation of faculty time to assessment matters should be met with appropriate allocation of University resources and

recognition. At the same time, the gradual implementation of the university-wide assessment program cannot unduly strain the financial, staffing, or other institutional resources of Bucknell.

- 7. The findings of outcomes assessment shall carry weight in department and program requests for resources from the University.** Since the goal of assessment efforts is to "close the loop" and use data to improve performance, new allocation or re-allocation of resources will be an on-going aspect of the improvement desired.

Specific Proposals

I. CoI proposes the creation of an *ad hoc* committee to function during the start up period only. It should consist of members of the faculty with experience in accreditation visits and/or professional expertise in assessment strategies. Departments may, at their option, submit their planning documents to this committee for one or both of two levels of review. The lowest level of review should simply determine whether, in the opinion of the committee, the departmental plan meets the minimum requirements put forth by Middle States. The second level of review should provide advice and counsel on the adequacy and feasibility of the plan to meet the department's stated goals for assessment; the point here is to give departments assistance with assessment matters outside their professional expertise.

II. CoI proposes the addition to the governance system of a permanent **Assessment Committee**, to be a subcommittee of CoI, and to have responsibility for three areas of assessment. The first is the matter of service courses; conversations between the relevant department and client departments should be institutionalized. The second area is General Education goals (see, for example, Standard XII of the Middle States Characteristics of Excellence document). It shall be a charge of this committee to gather information about these goals, and in particular, information from departments about how non-major courses further these goals. Third, the Assessment Committee should have oversight of those areas of student advising not part of departmental advising of majors, such as advising during the first two years, problems with numerous changes of advisor, and so on.

Proposed Membership for the permanent **Assessment Committee**:

- Four faculty members, one from Natural Sciences and Mathematics, one from Humanities, one from Social Sciences, and one from Engineering
- The Coordinator for the Common Learning Agenda
- The Director of the Writing Center, or a representative
- The Director of Information Services and Resources, or a representative
- An Associate Dean from the College of Arts and Sciences and an Associate Dean from the College of Engineering, or representatives
- The Director of Institutional Research, or a representative

During academic year 2001-2002, this committee should be staffed with those members of the Assessment Committee presently in existence, although dormant. In the longer term, members will be assigned, on the basis of a charge from CoI submitted to and approved by the faculty, as are other CoI subcommittees. During academic year 2001-2002, the committee will submit to CoI, then to be approved by the faculty, its mechanisms for the three assessment tasks outlined above. We encourage the committee to make the departmental burdens of documenting and reporting as light as possible.

Implementation

In order to implement a University assessment program smoothly and efficiently, CoI recommends the following three principles for departments and programs to consider:

1. Use existing assessment-related materials to create assessment plans. For example, departments could use recent external review documents to create assessment plans, and then replace some special preparations for future reviews with ongoing assessment documents.

2. Design assessment programs that will meet real needs or wants. The emphasis should be on identifying what the department or program needs/wants to know about its students and itself. Assessment is worthless, if it doesn't address pertinent questions.
3. Don't reinvent the wheel. Find and use existing assessment plans from other universities that suit departmental goals.

In practical terms, some departments have expressed a desire for guidelines on implementing an assessment plan. To meet this request, the Office of the Provost/VPAA has put together the appended document entitled "Steps in Building Department Assessment Plans." CoI endorses this document as a suitable agenda for departmental planning. Short-term implementation will entail something like this sequence of steps. Long-term implementation will rely on the creativity and diligence of departments to evaluate what they are doing without slavishly following prior models.

Rationale, Further Discussion, & Lingering Issues

The most striking fact to emerge from discussions within CoI (and with other faculty colleagues) is this: almost every faculty member wants to know more about some aspect or aspects of the effect of our curriculum on student learning. (There is an even stronger common sense that student advising is in bad shape.) Faculty members are displeased with the external imposition of a particular approach toward finding this out; some have philosophical or other objections to outcomes-based assessment; they are unhappy about the short time frame for imposition of such a system or, equivalently, the lack of a clear call to being thinking about this sooner; there is displeasure that this hasn't really gone through the governance system; some found their initial charge on these matters to have been inappropriately delivered; almost all are worried about the workload entailed by such a system. (It is somewhat encouraging to know that faculty at most institutions are similarly less supportive of outcomes assessment efforts than administrators (see [1]).) But after these points are made, almost everyone begins a sentence with "But I have been thinking for some time that we really ought to talk about ...". Therefore CoI believes that the gain in information and improvement in student learning to result justifies the extra work to adopt this program in a way useful to Bucknell, over and above that for a minimal program to satisfy Middle States.

CoI endorses the concept that departments are best suited to set their own goals and objectives and develop (perhaps with some professional assistance) ways to assess how well these are being met. The real requirements are that departments write down goals and objectives for student learning, choose (multiple) measures of outcomes as compared with these goals, gather the relevant data, and use the information gained to improve instruction. The terms "measurement" and "outcome" bother many faculty members who see these as quantifications of and limitations on what students can potentially become by virtue of membership in a department. Part of the challenge of academic life is to question or to re-define what is meant by technical terms like "measurement" and "outcome," while still working within the system. CoI believes that it is every department's right and responsibility to shape its assessment plan in ways that challenge, refocus, and expand the "accepted wisdom" on assessment. Departments should be given broad discretion in how they choose to do this. The report of findings to extra-departmental bodies should be largely at the decision of the department. Review of departmental plans by University bodies (other than that voluntary review described in Proposal II) should only occur in unusual circumstances. (We note in this context that the difficulties encountered by Honors Council in its efforts to review honors proposals from a variety of disciplines should give pause to any impetus toward University review of all departmental plans.) The "reporting burden" on departments should be made as small as possible.

Certain assessment matters require extra-departmental bodies, in some cases merely for coordination between departments or between the Colleges. However, General Education goals and student advising require more substantial activity. The proposed Assessment Committee should have charge of ensuring that interdepartmental conversations occur, and are documented, as appropriate for service courses. (The substance of those conversations is not, in general, a matter for this committee.) The committee should gather data on General Education goals of courses across the University, setting the results against the goals and objectives of the Common Learning Agenda (at least as a start), and should make recommendations for ways that the information gained should change course offerings. Finally, while some portion of advising is within departments (major

advising, for example), much of advising is not (and there is considerable feeling that advising is presently not being done well). CoI plans to take up the matter of advising in the near future, and will make recommendations to the faculty as a whole. However, the Assessment Committee will, in the long run, have the task of coordinating and assessing the non-major portion of advising.

One resource for the short term is the proposed *ad hoc* committee to assist departments with their assessment efforts. Numerous Bucknell faculty members have served as outside reviewers or members of accreditation teams for other departments, programs, and institutions. We should take advantage of this resource to aid departments unsure as to whether their plans will pass muster; this would constitute the first level of review proposed. Others of our colleagues have professional expertise in assessment measures, and they, supported by Jerry Rackoff and his staff as appropriate, should be available to assist departments in developing plans that really meet department needs, as internally defined. We anticipate that this committee would be formed immediately, and would serve this coming semester as departmental plans are being written. Suitable faculty should be encouraged to self-identify.

The matter of resources to support the enterprise, both startup and ongoing, is crucial. An allocation of resources specifically for assessment issues sends a message of seriousness and importance on the part of the administration. CoI recognizes that assessment is just one aspect of an integrated teaching program and should not, therefore, be overweighted in importance. The burden of assessment should not be overestimated. However, inevitable trade-offs of time mean that assessment will not be taken seriously by the faculty unless and until some combination of funding, leave-time, or other resources are proffered by the administration. Some possible examples of useful startup resources are: 1) funding for January, 2002 time for some individuals in a department to prepare an assessment plan, 2) funds for student assistants to aid in information gathering (such as web searches for strategies used at other institutions), and 3) assistance, at departmental request, by professionals knowledgeable in assessment strategies; other reasonable support as requested by departments. Examples of resources helpful for the ongoing nature of the enterprise include: 1) release time for department chairs and/or other department members for data gathering and analysis, 2) secretarial assistance for such gathering and tabulation, 3) funds for departments that choose to require of all students some external exam (such as a licensing exam or GRE), 4) funds for visits to, or visits from, like departments at other institutions with successful assessment plans, and 5) release time or summer support for the writing of "local exams," should this assessment measure be chosen. It is important to note in this context the distinction between, and different messages sent by, commitment of new resources and redirection of old ones (for example, extra summer support as opposed to permission for the traditional curricular grants to be used for assessment work). CoI calls on the administration to identify and earmark resources for assessment matters. The burden for the transition to an assessment system at Bucknell must be shared by all relevant bodies of the University.

Equally crucial in this regard is a commitment on the part of the University, and particularly the administration, to reward and recognize assessment activities. This is particularly vital because of the high level of faculty concern about assessment and some unfortunate aspects of its initial presentation (see, in this context, [1, pg. 33]). However, such reward and recognition is generally recognized as necessary if an assessment program is to be embraced by any institution (see [1]). In particular, it will be counterproductive to assume that the sort of in depth curricular conversations required have always taken place anyway and must merely be formalized. This is at odds with the fact that the press of day-to-day business does not, at present, provide time or opportunity for such conversations. Also, it will not be sufficient to provide vague assurances that these activities really already have a home somewhere in evaluation for the merit system, or for tenure and promotion. Faculty are skeptical, rightly, about "invisible work," or work it is hard to make visible to reviewing bodies, or work that, once the Middle States visit is behind us, will turn out to have been not very important. Also, it will probably be counterproductive to place such efforts in the "service" category, as it is the lowest-weighted category in the merit system. One possibility is that, at least during the startup period (say, the next three years), these activities will contribute toward the teaching (highest-weighted) category. Note that this is not automatic, since much present departmental committee work that directly concerns teaching is nonetheless viewed as service.

Recently, the use of "embedded assessment" has been proposed as a way to reduce the workload, and in particular the start-up work, for an outcomes assessment program. The idea is that examinations, projects, and writing (or portions thereof) assigned as part of the regular work of a course or courses could be used for the additional purpose of assessing student performance with respect to departmental, program, or General Education

goals and objectives. While CoI believes that there are some efficiencies to be gained here, we wish to sound a cautionary note. Many of the programs we have seen put forth as examples, including that used by the Engineering College, do not rely solely or even primarily on embedded assessment; some do not use it at all. The writing of assignments for such a dual use will not necessarily be easy. Further, such a use seems to call for re-grading or re-examination of this work, which is potentially quite time consuming. In departments with relatively few required courses, the number of courses in which this must occur may be very large, to ensure that various routes through the major all give information about student performance. If, as some have proposed, the approach is to take "snap-shots" of students at various points in their college and post-college careers, one might have to assemble such work into individual student portfolios, and both the assembly and the evaluation of such portfolios are not trivial tasks. (Also, the use of embedded measures to obtain post-graduation data seems impossible.) Finally, the insistence upon multiple measures seems to make reliance only on embedded measures impossible. So while CoI supports the use of embedded assessment, we believe the development of these tools, and their on-going use, will not necessarily provide some of the time savings hoped for, nor will the use of embedded measures likely to be sufficient for what either Middle States requires or what we ourselves will wish to do.

Finally, the matter of workload and faculty time must be explicitly and convincingly addressed by the administration (see [1, pg. 33]). The budget model used routinely for financial choices (in which alternatives are chosen or discarded) pertains equally well to another limited resource: faculty time. It is not sufficient to present another good thing to do, and to speak convincingly of its value. The surest route to the reluctant adoption of a *pro forma* assessment program is to assume that the community can absorb the extra work, or that (contrary to fact) much of what is needed is already in place. It will not work to point to past efforts for faculty load reductions or conceivable future reductions, since these came out of their own workload issues before assessment was ever mentioned. The administration is, after a rocky start, asking us to "establish a culture that embraces outcomes assessment [1, pg. 33]." The administration must provide leadership by being willing to say, concretely, what we will have to give up in order to afford a genuine assessment program.

[1] Accreditation and Faculty Working Together, Morse, J. A. and Santiago, Jr., G., Academe, January-February 2000, 30-34.

Steps in Building Department Assessment Plans

1. Present to all department members the purposes of and opportunities offered by the development of departmental assessment plans for student learning. Useful source documents include the Middle States Outcomes Assessment Plans: Guidelines for Developing Outcomes Assessment Plans at Colleges and Universities or “Best Practices in Outcomes Assessment “ found at www.msache.org under “Special Services” or your disciplinary professional organization.
2. Identify the individual(s) to spearhead the efforts for planning assessment in your department.
3. Determine 3 to 5 goals for the majors (and non-majors) in your curriculum. The definition of “curriculum” in this sense need not be identical to the set of courses required for an individual degree. Departments are encourage to define curricula in ways that are consistent with the overall intent of their educational programs to make their assessment efforts as effective and efficient as possible.
 - a. Preliminary definition of goals by the planning group, showing linkages to the University mission statement. (This is already accomplished in many departments in the catalog, the CSP document, or the department’s admission piece. For the purpose of assessment, it may be desirable to re-state these goals in different terms.)
 - b. Review and approval of the goal statements by the department as a whole
4. Choose multiple measures of student success in achieving each of the goals
 - a. Identify several possible approaches to determine whether students are achieving the learning goals you identified for them. An individual assessment tool (test, essay, portfolio, survey, interview) may provide useful measures for more than one goal.
 - b. Choose those that are...
 - i. Efficient means of measurement
 - ii. Cost Effective (dollars and time)
 - iii. Consistent with goals of diversity
5. Develop a departmental annual schedule for
 - a. Individual assessment activities
 - b. Summary and analysis of department assessment results once assessment activities are implemented
 - c. Planned response to assessment results, linked where appropriate to the University planning cycle

Most departments are expected to plan an implementation of assessment phased in over one or two years. In addition to spreading the effort over a longer time span, this may benefit assessment by using earlier results to inform planning for later phases.

6. Determine the group or individuals responsible for implementation of assessment
7. Review plan for consistency with the University’s mission
8. Departmental approval
9. Optionally submit department plan to the *ad hoc* Assessment Committee for review and feedback.

Department assessment plans belong to the faculty in the department which develops them. Select the assessment activities which will tell you what you want to know about your students’ learning. The information is for the department to use in improving how students learn in the department.