Institutional Assessment Council Meeting Minutes
2/13/15

Council members present: Janelle Voegele, Robert Halstead, Rowanna Carpenter, Neil Ramiller, Charles Klein, Tom Bielavit, Jim Hook. The four IAC ex-officio members, Sukhwant Jhaj, Kathi Ketcheson, Leslie McBride and Margaret Everett, joined the meeting to discuss the IAC proposal for program assessment reporting on a two-year cycle. The Council raised four questions that had emerged related to the proposal:

(1) What are the infrastructure needs implied by this proposal, and how do we ensure that we have the infrastructure (for example, technology, resources, and capacity) to make this initiative sustainable?
(2) What would expectations for reporting look like? How can there be encouragement for trying new things? Would it be safe to fail?
(3) Accountability: Who "owns" the reporting, and how would information be used?
(4) What are suggestions for moving forward to bring this proposal to the campus?

Discussion focused on the following points:

New council members wondered whether there was a campus norm for assessment reporting on the program level. Additionally, the question was raised as to whether expectations should be created related to assessment (for example, the expectation that gateway courses should play a role in helping to retain students), and the role of regular assessment reporting in sustaining expectations. The fact that NWCCU does not specifically prescribe how the campus should go about creating more consistency across programs related to assessment creates opportunities to design a process with program input that will be perceived as helpful to all.

Sukhwant Jhaj suggested moving forward by envisioning the outcomes of the proposal and working backward from those outcomes. What specifically is needed that will help the Council and departments to meet the goals? Clarify what is needed in terms of infrastructure and communicate it in the proposal. Focus on student learning. Create partnerships with associate deans, chairs and faculty. Have departmental conversations: what would departments need: help with analysis, staff, GAs, other? Infrastructure needs will emerge from conversations with departments. Work closely with Scott Marshall on an institutional process for moving forward with the proposal.

Leslie McBride and Margaret Everett emphasized increased clarity about how the proposal is value-added to programs and to the campus. In addition to preparing for Program Review, how else might the value-added to departments be communicated? Council members discussed alternatives for communicating a faculty-owned and faculty-driven process, as well as the advantages of measuring and doing something about results consistently, rather than at the last moment, and the use of data to effect improvement. Ex-officio members were in agreement, but urged the IAC to get additional feedback from departments about their perspectives on the value of the proposal to their programs. Ask questions, for example, how might the proposed process influence fiscal conversations?

Questions pertaining to institutional level for assessment reporting were discussed. If the IAC has decided to focus work at the program level, how does it propose to establish an institutional metric, particularly since the perception is that individual departments are less focused on campus-wide learning outcomes than they once were? The proposal should include the details of the process for discovering and communicating the commonalities across programs, their connection to the campus-wide learning outcomes, and how results will be communicated/check with individual departments.

The meeting adjourned at 11:00 a.m.