

## UOAC Minutes 1/31/2011

The Undergraduate Outcomes Assessment Committee held its ninth meeting of the year at 11:00 am Monday, January 31, 2011 in the Peterson Room of the Campus Center.

Present: Peter Christopher, Chrys Demetry, Michael Egan, Peter Hansen, Art Heinricher, Lance Schachterle

1. The committee welcomed Michael Egan '12, a student representative during 2011.
2. The committee approved the minutes of the meeting of January 25, 2011.
3. The committee continued its discussion of preparation for the NEASC self-study. The committee should investigate any outcomes with indicators that may suggest discussion of potential program changes. At present, where we do have new data it is generally from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). In addition, we will receive data from faculty reviews of the three degree requirements—the MQP, IQP, and Humanities and Arts Requirement—and from alumni surveys.

Alumni will be surveyed by the Donahue Institute to assess the impact of the WPI Plan and the longer term impact of the WPI project experience. Although the Donahue survey was commissioned with marketing purposes in mind, it may well yield results that are helpful for program assessment. More typically, alumni surveys have been done by academic departments subject to ABET accreditation. The departments not subject to ABET accreditation have been asked to do alumni surveys. However, the practice whereby departments administer separate surveys makes it extremely difficult to pull this information together for the broader institutional purposes. It would be advantageous if alumni surveys could be coordinated in some way.

4. Art Heinricher distributed notes for the UOAC regarding the NSSE benchmarks which compared the results for WPI students (in the first-year and senior year) who took the NSSE in 2003, 2006 and 2009 for each of the five benchmark areas: Level of Academic Challenge, Active and Collaborative Learning, Student-Faculty Interaction, Enriching Educational Experiences, Supportive Campus Environment. WPI students performed well compared to our NSSE-AITU peers in all but one of these areas:
  - WPI compares favorably on Level of Academic Challenge in the senior year; for the first year we are below the mean by an insignificant margin. The scores for the first year and for the senior year have increased with each administration of the survey.
  - WPI does poorly in Active and Collaborative Learning and has been consistently below the AITU mean in 2003, 2006 and 2009. The committee discussed this issue at length (see below).
  - WPI does well with regard to Student Faculty Interaction. The score has been increasing for the senior year but decreasing for the first year students.

- WPI does very well for Enriching Educational Experiences. The benchmark was renormed in 2006 so comparison between 2003 and 2006 is not possible. The effect size for the difference in the senior year remains one of the largest in the data (around 0.50).
- WPI does well in the Supportive Campus Environment benchmark, with an increase for first-year students each year of the surveys. We see a dip from 2006 to 2009 for seniors, but remain above AITU each year.

The committee discussed WPI's consistent underperformance in Active and Collaborative Learning. The questions for this area often ask about activities *during class* while the WPI program puts an emphasis on work done outside the classroom, at least in the junior and senior years. Indeed, for seniors, WPI scores showed significant improvement from 2006 to 2009, and the small gap between WPI and AITU scores for seniors is reflected in a small effect size (-.11) that only barely rises above the level that might cause concern.

However, the results for first-year students in Active and Collaborative Learning are not as encouraging. The gap between WPI and AITU scores for first-year students is wide and the effect size significant (-.25). Survey questions that contribute to these overall scores for Active and Collaborative Learning are these: asked questions in class or contributed to class discussion, made a presentation in class, worked with other students on projects during class, worked with classmates outside of class to prepare assignments, tutored or taught other students, participated in community-based projects in a course, discussed ideas from reading or classes with others outside of class. Together, responses to these questions are intended to capture how often students are asked to think about what they learn in different settings or collaborate with others in solving problems or mastering difficult material. WPI's consistently poor performance in this survey indicates that first-year students at WPI do not engage in these activities as often as their peers at other AITU institutions.

5. Art Heinricher distributed results from the Noel Levitz Survey that is conducted by the Division of Student Life. The committee should review these before the next meeting.
6. The committee will take up the EBI survey at a future meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 12 noon.

Respectfully submitted,

Peter Hansen, Secretary