

UOAC Minutes 11/29/2010

The Undergraduate Outcomes Assessment Committee held its seventh meeting of the year at 2:05 pm Monday, November 29, 2010 in the Morgan Room of the Campus Center.

Present: Peter Christopher, Chrys Demetry, Peter Hansen, Art Heinricher, Emanuel Jimenez, Lance Schachterle

1. The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting of November 1, 2010.
2. Lance Schachterle distributed a draft report on the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) to be used in the Outcomes Assessment Matrix. Every third year, WPI administers the NSSE to all first and fourth year students in the spring of the academic year. NSSE results allow us to compare our students' self-assessments of their learning to self-assessments from students in three other groups: an AITU-NSSE coalition, peers based on Carnegie classification, and peers selected by WPI. When the WPI Faculty adopted the Outcomes Assessment Matrix, it identified several areas in which data from the NSSE results should be used. This matrix provides a mechanism for the UOAC to monitor WPI's progress in achieving student learning outcomes and examine if any actions are warranted, which then would be referred to CAP.

The NSSE results group responses to questions to provide benchmark comparisons in five areas:

- Level of Academic Challenge
- Active and Collaborative Learning
- Student-Faculty Interaction
- Enriching Educational Experiences
- Supportive Campus Environment

The committee reviewed the results in each area of the survey. Generally, WPI students report satisfaction with these composite learning outcomes at levels higher than most comparison groups, especially in the senior year. Satisfaction with a Supportive Campus Environment declined from the first to the fourth year at WPI and also in the comparison groups. In the area of Enriching Educational Experiences, WPI performed very well and in the top 10% of the entire NSSE pool. The committee discussed how these global categories are useful, but the matrix directs us to particular indicators.

WPI students continue to give higher aggregate responses for learning outcomes in the science, engineering and mathematical questions, and also with some project-based questions relating to problem-solving and team work activities. But they give lower aggregate responses for learning outcomes dealing with social, environmental, political or economic issues. Evidence of developing a personal moral or professional ethical code remains comparatively weak; these data also show our students engage less often in social or educational discussions with students in ethnic or religious groups other than their own. Speaking and written communication skills are marginally lower. However, most of these negative differences with respect to other undergraduates are small, with

few or any rising to the level NSSE indicates should trigger a moderate concern. The NSSE questions about work in courses do not necessarily capture student responses to work in their IQP and MQP.

3. The committee will update the Outcomes Assessment Matrix before the upcoming NEASC visit. In the past we have been weak in Outcome 8: "Graduates of WPI will be aware of how their decisions affect and are affected by other individuals separated by time, space, and culture." In addition, there is not much data for Outcome 9: "Graduates of WPI will be aware of personal, societal, and professional ethical standards."
4. Lance Schachterle and Art Heinricher suggested that we need to know more about ethics initiatives on campus. Dean Heinricher will discuss this issue with Department Heads so that we have a better inventory of courses, projects, speakers, or capstone experiences that have an ethics component.
5. The WPI Outcomes Assessment website is being updated in advance of the NEASC visit. Lance Schachterle reminded members to examine the updates on a developmental website before they are moved to the public site (<http://www.wpi.edu/academics/Outcomes/>).
6. The meeting adjourned at 2:55 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Peter Hansen, Secretary