

## Undergraduate Outcomes Assessment Committee

Minutes #4

Friday, February 10, 2012, 1-2 p.m. SL11

Present: Lance Schachterle (Chair), Dean Art Heinricher, Peter Hansen, Jianyu Liang, Nancy Bezies (SGA), Tanja Dominko (Secretary)

Chair L. Schachterle called the meeting to order at 1:00 pm.

### 1. Chair L. Schachterle welcomed Nancy Bezies as the new SGA member on the committee.

### 2. Continued discussion of metrics of students' time on task

One of the criteria that will be reviewed by the NEASC visiting team during the accreditation process is WPI's compliance with the federal regulation describing a credit hour below.

**Credit Hour:** Federal regulation defines a credit hour as an amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement that is an institutional established equivalence that reasonably approximates not less than: (1) One hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out of class student work each week for approximately fifteen weeks for one semester or trimester hour of credit, or ten to twelve weeks for one quarter hour of credit, or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time; or (2) At least an equivalent amount of work as required in paragraph (1) of this definition for other academic activities as established by the institution including laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours. (CIHE Policy 111. See also *Standards for Accreditation* 4.34.)

Institutional policies and procedures for determining the credit hours awarded	The faculty expectation for course and project work, published in the Undergraduate Catalog, is 15-17 hours per week for all activities related to a 7-week course or project. This equates to between 105 and 119 total hours of effort for 3 credits of activity. Course reports collected at the end of every class in every term ask students to report time-on-task and these data are reviewed by faculty and administration twice each year.
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Both the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) survey and the WPI Student Course Reports provide opportunities for students to estimate how many hours they spend working on each course out of class (Question 9a and Question 26, respectively). Both reports are provided in **Appendix 1** below. However, both surveys ask the relevant question differently, and it's not clear whether students do or do not count time spent in class or labs when responding. Experiences show that the number of contact hours per course in different disciplines can be significantly higher than assumed; primarily by additional lab, project and/or conference sessions.

In addition, choices for time spent are somewhat different between the two forms preventing direct comparisons between the two forms. It is UOAC's recommendation that WPI revise question 26 on the student course report to address both problems. Here is the current version of question 26:

**26. On average, what were the total hours spent per week on all activities related to this course?**

- 8 hrs. or fewer       9-12 hrs.       13-16 hrs.  
 7-20 hrs.       21 hrs. or more.

This is problematic for two reasons. First, students report that they interpret the question in two ways: some say that they include class, conference and lab time in their report while others say that they report only time spent outside of scheduled class, conference, and lab meetings. The other problem (less serious) is that we are not able to compare WPI student responses on the course report forms with the data collected every 3 years when WPI participates in the NSSE survey.

UOAC would like CAP to consider the following new questions. The first new question asks students to report how many hours they spend in class (lecture, conference, and lab). The second new question matches the NSSE question scale:

**26A. On average, how many hours did you spend each week in lecture, conference, and lab?**

- 3 hr/wk       4 hr/wk       5 hr/wk       6 hr/wk       7 hr/wk or more

**26B. On average, what were the total hours spent in each 7-day week outside of lecture, conference, and labs in work related to this course (including studying, reading, writing, homework, rehearsal, and any other academic activity)?**

- 0 hr/wk       1-5 hr/wk       6-10 hr/wk       11-15 hr/wk  
 16-20 hr/wk       21-25 hr/wk       26-30 hr/wk       30+ hr/wk

This approach makes it very clear that we are asking about two different things. We can then combine data when necessary. We can also compare the student answers on 26A with the number of hours that we think the course is supposed to meet.

Dean Heinricher mentioned data he had assembled on time on task students reported by department and program, and also by class format, especially two two-hour classes per week vs. four one-hour classes. Generally students reported fewer study hours outside of class in the former format.

**The next UOAC meeting will be held on March 2<sup>nd</sup> at 1pm in Gordon Library Conference room.**

**The meeting was adjourned at 1:45 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,

Tanja Dominko, secretary  
Biology and Biotechnology

**Appendix 1**

**NSSE Question 9a: About how many hours do you spend in a typical 7-day week doing each of the following?**

- a. Preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, doing homework or lab work, analyzing data, rehearsing, and other academic activities)**

From NSSE survey, spring 2006, Question 9a: (p. 11)

	First-Year Students				Seniors				
	Response Options	WPI %	AITU %	Carnegie Peers %	NSSE 2006 %	WPI %	AITU %	Carnegie Peers %	NSSE 2006 %
Preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, doing homework or lab work, analyzing data, rehearsing, and other academic activities)	0 hr/wk	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
	1-5 hr/wk	9	12	10	18	6	16	14	18
	6-10 hr/wk	23	22	24	27	18	20	21	26
	11-15 hr/wk	22	19	22	21	17	19	18	20
	16-20 hr/wk	22	20	20	16	17	17	19	15
	21-25 hr/wk	12	12	11	9	15	10	11	9
	26-30 hr/wk	7	7	6	5	9	6	7	5
	30+ hr/wk	5	9	6	4	18	11	9	6
Percentages of more than 10hrs/wk	68	66	66	55	76	63	65	56	

From NSSE survey, spring 2009, Question 9a: (p. 11)

	First-Year Students					Seniors			
	Response Options	WPI %	AITU %	Carnegie Peers %	NSSE 2009 %	WPI %	AITU %	Carnegie Peers %	NSSE 2009 %
Preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, doing homework or lab work, analyzing data, rehearsing, and other academic activities)	0 hr/wk	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0
	1-5 hr/wk	10	9	10	18	6	13	14	18
	6-10 hr/wk	18	21	20	27	14	21	23	26
	11-15 hr/wk	26	21	23	21	13	20	20	20
	16-20 hr/wk	17	19	19	16	21	17	17	15
	21-25 hr/wk	15	12	13	9	13	11	10	9
	26-30 hr/wk	6	8	7	5	10	7	6	5
	30+ hr/wk	8	9	7	4	22	11	9	6
Percentages of more than 10hrs/wk	72	69	66	55	79	66	62	56	

From "Student Course Report," Q. 26: "On average, what were the total hours you spent per week on all activities related to this course" (***not counting class, labs, etc.***) The following percentages represent the percent of students reporting time spent on studying in the designated time block. Unfortunately the Course Report question does not align well with this outcome; students are not asked specifically to exclude time spent in class or labs. (Anecdotal evidence suggests they do NOT count class or lab time, but we need to make this exclusion more specific.)

<b>Semester</b>	<b>8 hrs or &lt;</b>	<b>Time spent "in all activities related to this course"</b>				<b>sum: 9 or &gt;</b>
		<b>9-12</b>	<b>13-16</b>	<b>17-20</b>	<b>21 or &gt;</b>	
<b>Fall 2005</b>	33.60%	39.60%	17.30%	6.30%	3.40%	65.40%
<b>Spring 2006</b>	33.70%	40.10%	18.30%	7.80%	4.40%	65.30%
<b>Fall 2006</b>	28.90%	40.90%	18.20%	7.80%	4.40%	71.10%
<b>Spring 2006</b>	33.70%	40.05%	15.73%	6.71%	3.81%	66.30%
<b>Fall 2006</b>	29.13%	40.67%	18.08%	7.78%	4.35%	70.87%
<b>Spring 2007</b>	30.89%	41.51%	16.78%	6.62%	4.19%	69.11%
<b>Fall 2007</b>	27.71%	40.49%	19.51%	7.83%	4.45%	72.29%
<b>Spring 2008</b>	27.28%	40.16%	19.51%	8.19%	4.36%	72.22%

<b>Fall 2008</b>	25.49%	39.68%	21.04%	8.73%	5.06%	74.51%
<b>Spring 2009</b>	28.54%	40.05%	21.02%	7.76%	4.53%	71.46%
<b>Fall 2009</b>	26.82%	40.24%	19.13%	8.92%	4.89%	73.18%
<b>Spring 2010</b>	27.19%	39.57%	19.12%	8.48%	5.63%	72.81%
<b>Fall 2010</b>	25.35%	39.05%	20.19%	9.40%	6.01%	74.65%
<b>Spring 2011</b>	26.05%	40.01%	18.84%	8.67%	6.39%	73.91%

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Tanja Dominko, DVM, PhD  
 Associate Professor  
 Biology and Biotechnology Department  
 Bioengineering Institute  
 Room # 4020  
 Life Sciences and Bioengineering Center at Gateway Park  
 60 Prescott Street  
 Worcester, MA 01605  
 office: 508-831-4108  
 cell: 508-641-4265  
[tdominko@wpi.edu](mailto:tdominko@wpi.edu)