

UOAC Minutes 3/25/2011

The Undergraduate Outcomes Assessment Committee held its twelfth meeting of the year at 2:00 pm on Friday, March 25, 2011, in the Taylor Room of the Campus Center.

Present: Peter Christopher, Peter Hansen, Art Heinricher, Lance Schachterle

Guests: Tracey Leger-Hornby, Christine Drew

1. The committee approved the minutes of the meeting of February 28, 2011.
2. The committee welcomed Tracey Leger-Hornby and Christine Drew from Gordon Library. Lance Schachterle reviewed the UOAC charge to oversee collection of evidence that students are achieving the Undergraduate Learning Outcomes approved by the faculty. The committee appreciated the library's assistance in responding to these questions in the Outcomes Matrix. To what extent do student project reports contain evidence of ...

3.3 "meeting expectations for non-discipline-specific technological tools to acquire, process, and communicate information" [i.e., information literacy]

7.2 "research that integrates multiple sources that reflect different and contradictory perspectives."

7.3 "critical evaluation of the quality of information resources at an acceptable level or better."

9.3 "demonstrating professional citation practice."

10.1 "demonstrating adequate ability in locating literature while conducting project research."

Lance Schachterle noted that librarians would rarely see final student projects, so we were interested in hearing more about useful proxies like sessions run for students to enable them to acquire and use these professional skills.

Tracey Leger-Hornby noted the Library's annual report includes many useful statistics, and the Library is preparing chapter 7 of the NEASC self-study. The library offers programs of instruction for undergraduates and graduate students through individual consultations, workshops, and instruction classes and programs in order to meet a variety of needs. They now have a research and instruction group in the library. The library is attempting to embed this work into the curriculum of WPI over all four years so that students develop information literacy and research skills at increasing levels of sophistication. Christine Drew noted that she and Art Heinricher have been doing an assessment of research skills among first-year students: WPI students can judge relevance of sources but showed weaknesses in internet search skills; she would be happy to share further details with the committee. The library also participates in LibQUAL and other surveys that measure satisfaction with services rather than the development of skills or learning outcomes. They will forward relevant indicators regarding the above outcomes to the committee.

Gordon Library works with instructors of the Great Problems Seminar, the Humanities and Arts Inquiry Seminar, ID2050 for off-campus IQP projects, some design classes, and some MQP groups.

They reach about half the junior class by working with ID2050. They are in discussions with the IGSD about ways to reach students who do on-campus IQPs. The library strives to offer comparable services to undergraduates, graduate- and distance-learning students, but they cannot offer as many sessions intended for graduate students due to limited resources. The library offers virtual consultations and is currently developing several online modules about research skills such as background research and a literature review. The committee discussed the pressure on library resources if they were to work with all students in the same way they work with students in ID2050. Students trained as research mentors are one possibility, but surveys indicate that students do not like this option. "Project Information Literacy," a large-scale study at the University of Washington, provides a comparative framework for understanding student research habits at a variety of institutions.

The committee thanked Tracey and Christine, who left the meeting.

3. The committee reviewed agenda items for remaining meetings this year. These will address writing and academic advising as a follow-up to the Noel-Levitz survey. Members of the committee received assignments to review particular departmental self-studies prepared for 2008 ABET Accreditation to find evidence of student's written and oral communication.

Meeting adjourned at 2:55 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Peter Hansen, Secretary