

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
The Undergraduate Educational Policy and Curriculum Committee

Minutes

240 SH

February 22, 2024

Attending: Jill Beckman, Jean-François Charles, Rodica Curtu, Anita Jung, Cornelia Lang (chair), Liz Lundberg (staff), Emilie Maurel-Destruel, Cinda Coggins Mosher, Amira Qidwai, Christine Shea, Amy Strathman

Absent: Asha Bhandary

1. The committee started by spending a few moments on introductions, because Matt Shadle, the new Academic Assessment Coordinator for CLAS UP, was present.
2. Next the committee reviewed and approved the minutes from the meeting on February 15, 2024.
3. Next Dr. Shadle presented information about the undergraduate program assessment process that CLAS departments participate in. He explained how our process compares to those of other schools with which he is familiar and showed the form departments fill out as they conduct program assessments. Departments have quite a bit of leeway in terms of how they conduct program assessments and gather data to answer the questions on the form—the process should not be overly proscriptive, because departments vary greatly in number of students, structure of majors, and number of General Education and service courses, among other things. The idea is to give some broad guidelines but allow departments to decide their own specific implementation. For example, departments are encouraged to gather feedback from students, and they do so in a variety of ways ranging from surveys and town-hall-style meetings to student advisory boards and capstone projects asking seniors to redesign their major. Another area of focus, in addition to student feedback, is how departments are assessing learning. Departments use methods including incorporating this analysis into their capstone courses, requiring seniors in their majors to produce portfolios that include self-reflection, and examining random samples of student work from different points in the major.

Dr. Shadle explained that after departments have submitted their program assessments, Wayne Jacobson (Director, Assessment) compiles them into a report to share with the college as a whole, providing positive examples of assessment methods other departments might want to borrow. (The committee also looked at the [Assessment Exchange](#) on the Office of the Provost website, where departments' assessments can be found.) Dr. Shadle will also be reading departments' program assessments as they are submitted, and he will be able to work with departments during that process and afterward, to address any findings that require follow up. Dr. Shadle and Dean Lang explained that the assessment process is for HLC accreditation, and Dr. Shadle's position was created to make the process deeper than simply complying with this requirement. Having someone in this role means the College will dedicate more time to addressing what might be found in assessments, such as structural issues or barriers it might be able to help with, and will allow the College to see what factors have enabled positive changes in departments.

The committee discussed the relationship between departmental assessment and review of General Education categories. They also discussed the possibility for future assessments of minors: HLC only requires assessments of majors, but the process could be useful internally for minors as well, especially ones that serve many students. The committee also discussed the balance of student feedback with faculty feedback. It is important to engage students in the process, but ultimately faculty are the experts in their areas, and they know what elements of their programs are essential and what teaching methods are effective. This led to some discussion about learning as well, and ways to take larger contexts of students' lives into consideration, as well as ways to capture in assessments what departments are doing to help students become better learners.

4. Next Dean Lang resumed her presentation from February 15 about teaching evaluations. She started with some common themes that came up in faculty and administrator focus groups, like faculty contributions that are not currently captured, the culture around classroom observations, a lack of clear understanding of evaluation criteria, and uncertainty around how student feedback is used. Focusing on CLAS criteria for promotion, Dean Lang explained that the task force has drafted a definition of "teaching effectiveness" that focuses on growth over time. They recommend that teaching portfolios should not contain only examples of excellence in the present moment but should show the instructor's journey over time and responsiveness to feedback. The task force is generating/gathering examples of what this might look like in the promotion packet. Their recommendations are helping people provide context for data such as ACE scores and know appropriate ways to use those scores to minimize bias. The task force is also encouraging a shift to a more thorough classroom observation process, with adequate preparation and follow up.

The institution overall is moving teaching evaluations in this direction, so it is the College's task to create and deliver forms, processes, and trainings to support this shift. Dean Lang has given this presentation about teaching evaluations to all committees leading reviews and as part of new faculty onboarding over the last three years; in this way, the task force is working on shifting the culture and expectations around teaching evaluations.

5. Next Professor Strathman reported to the committee what she and Profs. Dana Thomann and Bruce Nottingham-Spencer had recently reported to Faculty Assembly on behalf of the CLAS committee examining policies around Instructional Track Faculty (ITF). The last set of policies expired at the beginning of the new year, and new ones are needed by July. On February 21, Professors Strathman and Thomann went over the committee's charge and their proposed policy changes with the Faculty Assembly and then were joined by Prof. Nottingham-Spencer to address any questions. They covered four main policy topics:
 - a. changes to the standard effort allocation expectations for most ITF to 80% teaching/20% service;
 - b. how the proposal removes professional productivity as a basic promotion criterion but will positively count professional productivity in evaluations and promotions, acknowledging that the vast majority of it supports effective teaching, and that some current promotion criteria (such as travel to conferences) are unsupported due to limited departmental travel funds;
 - c. streamlining the evaluation procedures to place more emphasis on teaching; and

- d. updating promotion criteria to align expectations for the various ranks and effort allocation, recognizing how ITF can take on leadership roles given the needs of their departments.

One challenge of the committee is working with differences across departments, creating policies broad enough to account for all but specific enough to capture everything ITF are contributing.

Respectfully submitted,

Emilie Maurel-Destruel
Associate Professor, French & Italian, Linguistics
Secretary, UEPCC